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MARCH 2018
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REVIEWED
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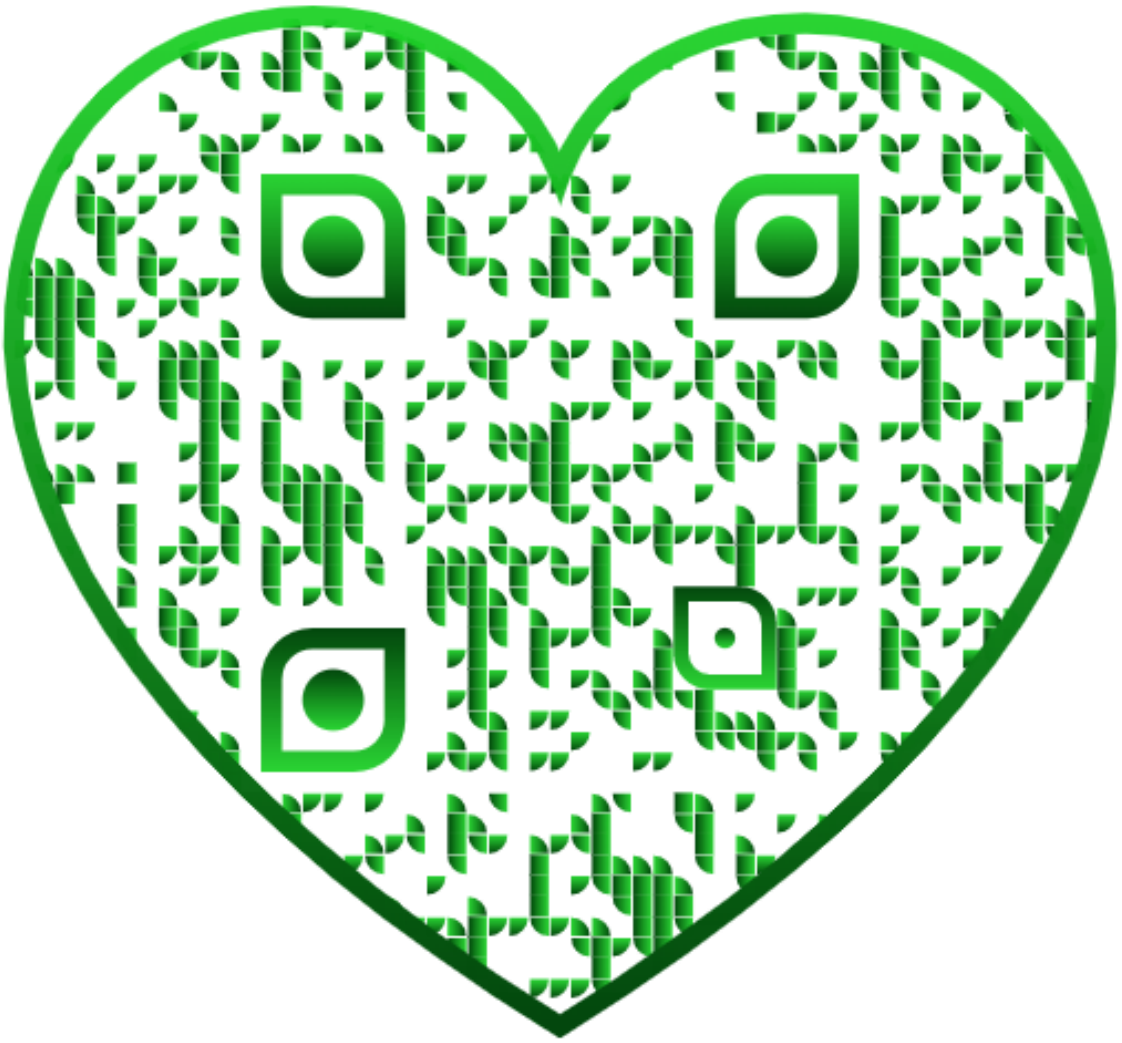
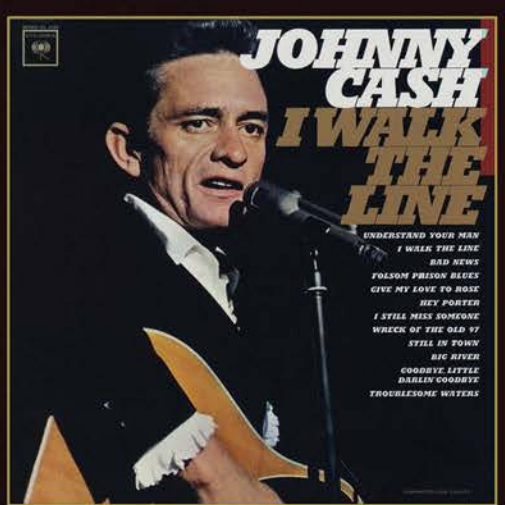


LEGENDARY LIVE ALBUMS AND COLLECTIONS FROM THE MAN IN BLACK



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Welcome...

One minute into *Further On Up The Road*, during The Band's legendary *The Last Waltz* farewell show, there's a moment that epitomises the uniquely visceral, lightning-in-a-bottle quality of the live album. Having just embarked on the guitar solo, the strap on Eric Clapton's Fender Stratocaster detaches. Clapton momentarily exclaims, exchanges a glance with guitarist Robbie Robertson and, without missing a beat, Robertson picks up the baton and delivers the solo with blistering, off-the-cuff brilliance. It's one of the most documented parts of this extraordinary live record that brought together arguably the finest cast of musicians ever to share a stage: read more on p68.

40 years on from the release of *The Last Waltz*, we salute the often-maligned, but eminently collectible genre that is the live album. Bob Dylan's furious reaction to the 'Judas' heckle at Manchester Free Trade Hall on his *1966 Live* LP; The Who's sonic assault on a university refectory on *Live At Leeds*; Kurt Cobain's haunting farewell that is Nirvana's *MTV Unplugged In New York*; the sweaty intensity of James Brown at the Apollo in '63; the 1979 time capsule of the Ramones at the Rainbow Theatre and Thin Lizzy's *Live And Dangerous*, unleashed in 1978… Turn to p60 to see if your ultimate live album made our list.

40 years from the release of The Last Waltz, we salute the often-maligned genre that is the live album

The moment that Johnny Cash walked on stage, looked out on a crowd of inmates at the maximum security Folsom Prison and uttered: "Hello, I'm Johnny Cash" heralds possibly the greatest live record of them all. Five decades on, we tell the story behind the LP, as Charly Records turns the spotlight on Cash's early years with a reissue programme of his Sun Records albums. Cut from the original master tapes, turn to p46 to find out why they're being called the best-sounding Cash reissues ever committed to vinyl.

Elsewhere, we visit the new breed of pressing plants meeting the growing demand for vinyl, tell the story of Coldcut duo Matt Black and Jon More's Ninja Tune label, meet Calexico and Tune-Yards to talk about their new albums, and The Trip explores the record shops of Marseille. We also hear from Craig Braun about his part in creating some of rock's most iconic designs – The Stones' 'lips' logo and *Sticky Fingers* zipper sleeve and The Velvet Underground's banana among them.

Long Live Vinyl is now 12 issues old and with the countdown to Record Store Day 2018 well under way, stay tuned for something special next issue. Thanks for reading…

Gary Walker *Editor*

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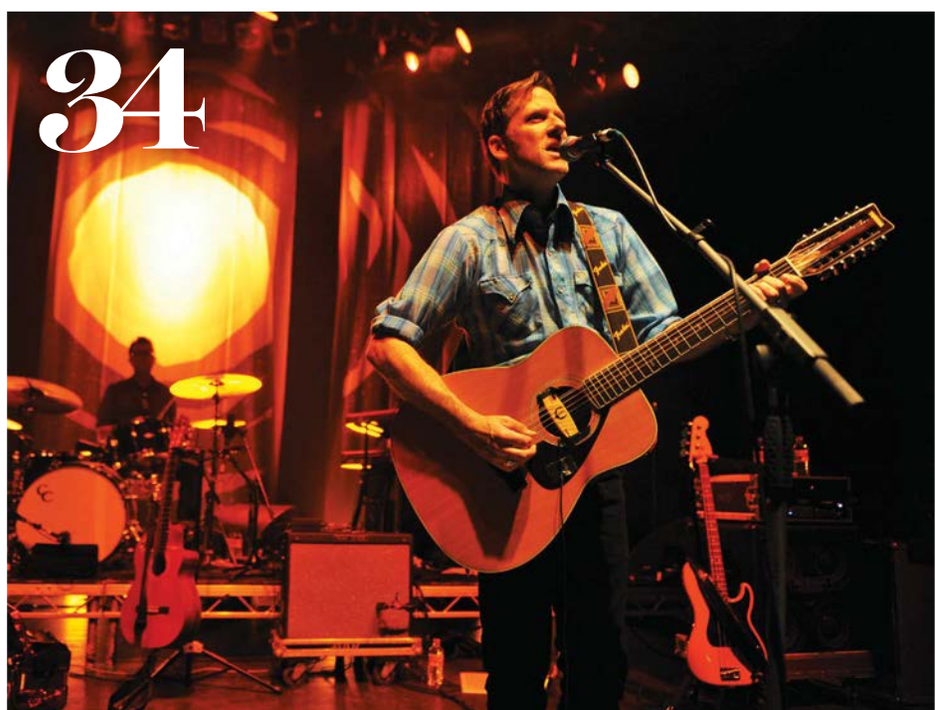

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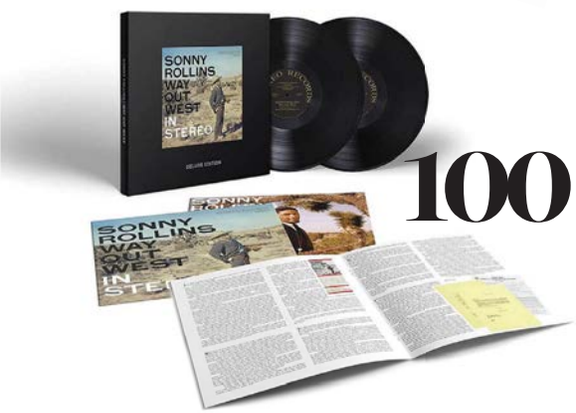

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LONG LIVE VINYL

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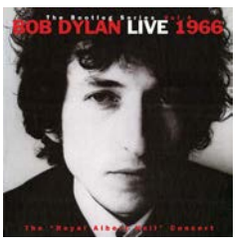
LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite live albums



Gary Walker
Live 1966
Bob Dylan

Owen Bailey
Alive 2007
Daft Punk

Jonny Highett
Kicking Television
Wilco

Andy Cottle
MTV Unplugged
Nirvana

Ian Peel
Urk
Nits

Meet our expert contributors…

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Laura Barton
Laura is a writer and broadcaster. A regular contributor to *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, she is also a contributing editor at *Q* magazine, and an A&R scout for a music publishing company. Her BBC Radio 4 series *Notes From A Musical Island* returns next year, and she is currently hard at work on a book about music and sadness.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 2000s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and others. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him in a strop during an interview.

Murray Stassen
After making DIY punk zines as a teenager in South Africa, Murray moved to London in 2008 and went on to write for *VICE*, among others, before landing a job at *Music Week*, swiftly working his way up to deputy editor and having Brian Wilson turn his back on him during an interview. Murray now edits *Audio Media International*.

Gary Tipp
Gary has been collecting vinyl since time immemorial and still can't walk past a charity shop without going in on the off chance there's a mint treasure nestled somewhere in between the easy listening and the obligatory copy of Paul Young's *No Parlez*. He's also been writing words for magazines for longer than anyone can remember.

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Some Highlights of upcoming sales, but do check out the catalogues as there are so many more fantastic items than we can mention here!

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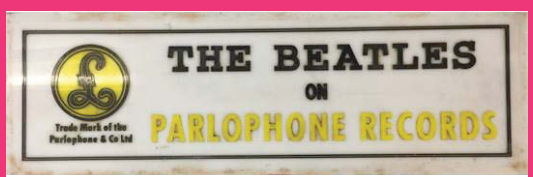
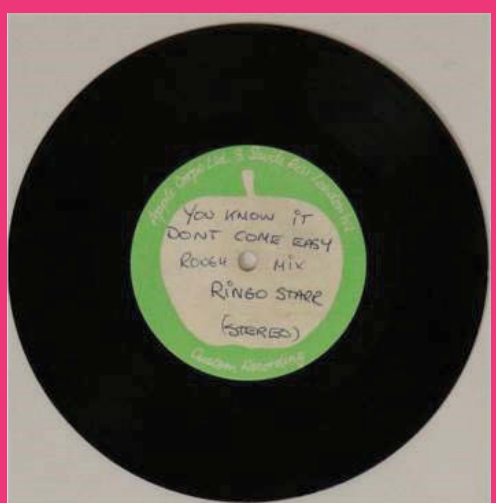
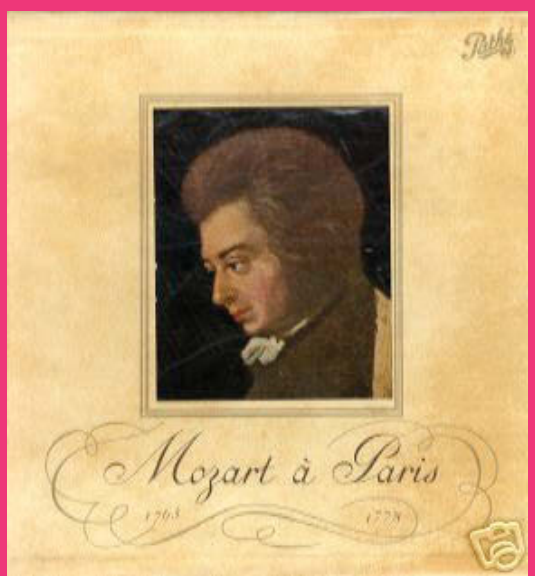


BEATLES PARLOPHONE ORIGINAL 1964 SHOP SIGN

DAVID BOWIE - CRACKED ACTOR/ALL THE MADMEN
7" APPLE ACETATE



RINGO STARR/GEORGE HARRISON - YOU KNOW IT DON'T COME EASY - APPLE 7" ACETATE RECORDING (ROUGH MIX WITH GEORGE VOCALS)



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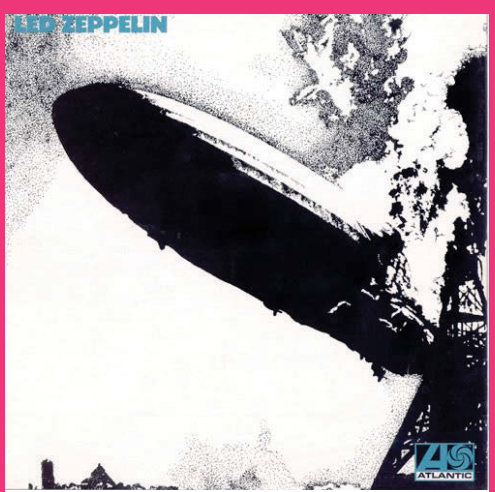

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TUESDAY 6TH FEBRUARY - SINGLE OWNER COLLECTION OF DEMOS, ACETATES, RARE VINYL
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On the record

BELLE HERE NOW

Stuart Murdoch and co release new EPs and embark on a European tour

Indie darlings Belle And Sebastian head out on an extensive European tour this month to celebrate the release of the last in a trilogy of 12" EPs. 16 February is the date for *How To Solve Our Human Problems Part 3*, complete with a box to house this and the series' previous two instalments (read our review on page 103).

"The releases were definitely conceived of as 12" vinyl," keyboardist Chris Geddes tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "I think for Stuart [Murdoch, lead singer/songwriter], a big inspiration was the releases by bands like the Cocteau Twins, The Smiths and My Bloody Valentine, where a 12" EP would include a non-album single that was definitely the 'A-side' and then other tracks that might be a bit more varied or esoteric than what a band might put on an LP."

Chris has been on a vinyl spree recently, while Belle And Sebastian were touring Japan. "I picked up a nice copy of Gene Clark's *With The Gosdin Brothers* album," he tells us, "and I met my friend Matt Sullivan, who runs the amazing label Light In The Attic, who was kind enough to give me a copy of *Even A Tree Can Shed Tears*, their new compilation of 60s and 70s Japanese folk and rock, which is tremendous."

Alva Noto and Ryuichi Sakamoto's *Glass* is an improvised record recorded in The Glass House, a fully see-through building in Connecticut

Ryuichi Remodels

Two new special vinyl releases hit the shelves this month from soundtrack classicist par excellence, Ryuichi Sakamoto. First up, 16 February sees the release of *Glass*, a live recording of improvisation with Alva Noto that was recorded at architect Philip Johnson's The Glass House, a completely see-through building in Connecticut. This is followed a week later with the 23 February sequel to last year's acclaimed *async*. *async remodels* features 11 remixes from artists such as Jóhann Jóhannsson, Björk producer Arca and synth-pop groups Electric Youth and S U R V I V E.

"When I was offered to perform at The Glass House, the first idea that came to my mind was to use the house itself as a musical instrument," Sakamoto explains. "It was completely musical and 100% improvised… Looking at the beautiful landscape through the glass wall… affected me, affected us, I should say, a lot. It's a strange mixture of natural, nature, and artificial things, art." *async remodels* is out via Milan, while *Glass* is being released by Alva Noto's own label, Noton.

DUKE OF ORG
The latest deep-end jazz reissues on the Org Music label include Duke Ellington And His Orchestra's *Volume 1: 1943* and the double album of Louis Armstrong & His All Stars' *Jazz Is Back In Grand Rapids*.

SCI-FI ON RECORD
Fans of cinematic-sounding sci-fi-themed soundtracks take note: *Stranger Things: Music From The Netflix Original Series* and *Jeff Wayne's Musical Version Of The War Of The Worlds* both get a vinyl release this month.

ROCKING STONE
The Stone Free Festival takes place at the O2, London on 16 June and features Scorpions' and Megadeth's only UK shows this year; there's also a record fair, with selected rock dealers.

RECORD STORE DAY DATE
Record Store Day 2018 is confirmed as Saturday 21 April. Last year, more than 500 artists released limited-edition vinyl editions; this year's list will be unveiled in March.

CLASSIC POP PRESENTS

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Popmaster Live! returns in March with BBC Radio 2 presenter Ken Bruce as host. Our sister magazine *Classic Pop* is looking forward to testing your music knowledge with the ultimate 80s pop quiz.

There are only a few VIP tickets remaining, so you'd better be quick if you'd like to meet Ken, receive a welcome drink and get a copy of the official *Popmaster! Quiz Book* and front-row tables.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Fun, fast and full of prizes, the Readers' Choice Round will be one of the sponsored rounds, where teams can win prizes from the likes of HMV and record label Rhino.

Competition sponsor Audio-Technica will be giving each member of the overall winning team a pair of ATH-AR5BT headphones worth £169.

There will also be a spot prize on the night for one lucky winner to land an AT-LP3 turntable worth £199!

LISTENING STATIONS

Audio-Technica will also be providing four listening stations at the event, giving quizzers the opportunity to listen to a record from Rhino's extensive catalogue before the quiz starts, as well as during the interval.

Teams can feature up to eight people per table. You can also enter the quiz as an individual or a couple and we will allocate you to a team.

Popmaster Live! takes place on 3 March at 155 Bishopsgate in London and runs from 7-10pm.

WIN! A TURNTABLE WORTH £199

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GO-GO GET IT
Although the limited-edition blue/silver/red/white vinyl edition is unfortunately already sold out, Belinda Carlisle's imperial-period, four-LP 180g *The Vinyl Collection 1987-1993* boxset is also out on 23 February as an unlimited black-vinyl edition.

GO COLLECTA
Craig David's 90s behemoth *Born To Do It* is reissued on vinyl on 2 February, alongside his *Rewind* anthology. Talking of the 90s, look out for a new vinyl edition of Jamiroquai's *Synkronized* on 23 February.

BEST ART VINYL ANNOUNCED

2017'S BEST COVER ART WINNER

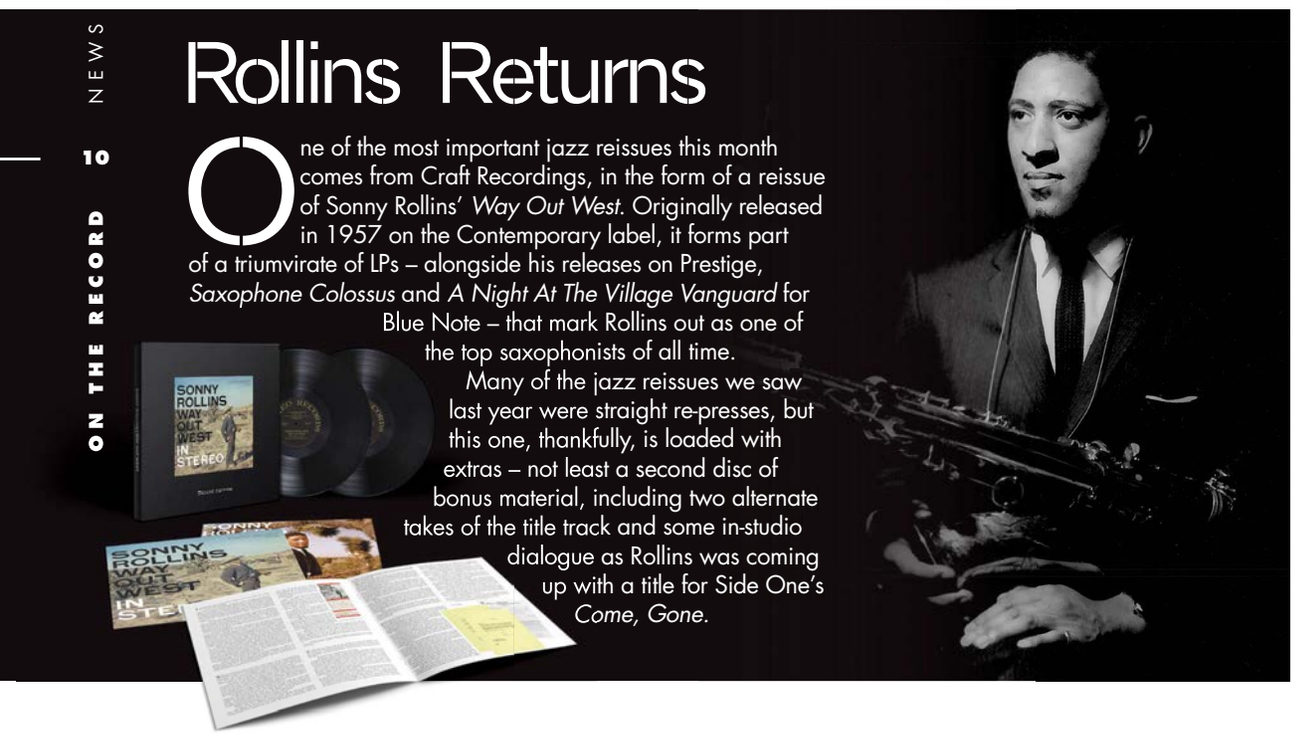
As we go to press, the Golden Envelope has just been opened and the winner of this year's increasingly prestigious Best Art Vinyl Award has been crowned. At The Hari Hotel, Belgravia – which also featured an installation of all nominees in its entrance – the results of a public vote placed Run The Jewels' album cover for *Run The Jewels 3* in first place, followed by the intricate illustrations of Father John Misty's *Pure Comedy* and the light installations of Vessels' *The Great Distraction*.

Run The Jewels' art director was Timothy Saccenti (whose previous clients include Lana Del Rey and A Tribe Called Quest) and the cover was based on original drawings by Nick Gazin. An exhibition showcasing all of the competition's nominated album covers now heads off on tour, starting with The Vinyl Café in King's Cross before moving on to galleries and music stores in Germany, Italy and Hungary.

Rollins Returns

One of the most important jazz reissues this month comes from Craft Recordings, in the form of a reissue of Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West*. Originally released in 1957 on the Contemporary label, it forms part of a triumvirate of LPs – alongside his releases on Prestige, *Saxophone Colossus* and *A Night At The Village Vanguard* for Blue Note – that mark Rollins out as one of the top saxophonists of all time.

Many of the jazz reissues we saw last year were straight re-presses, but this one, thankfully, is loaded with extras – not least a second disc of bonus material, including two alternate takes of the title track and some in-studio dialogue as Rollins was coming up with a title for Side One's *Come, Gone*.



TREKKING THE INDIE MAP

If you're looking to buy a new vinyl release from the Beggars Group – such as Matador Records' signings Belle And Sebastian, who lead our news section this issue – take a look at their interactive map of independent retailers at indieretail.beggars.com. It's a great guide to the world's indie stores, ranging from Kowalski Records in Buenos Aires, to Monka Magic Vinyl in Singapore… to what is one of the UK's most northerly record store, Chameleon Records in Aberdeen.

CORRECTION
In our Factory Records feature in Issue 11 we incorrectly reported that the label's co-founder Alan Erasmus had died. Alan is, in fact, alive and well. In the news section of the same issue, quotes from Greg Lake's autobiography were reported in the present tense. Greg passed away in December 2016. We apologise for any confusion or upset caused by these two inaccuracies.

FAIR PLAY
The Jaarbeurs Convention Centre in Utrecht will host the 49th edition of the Mega Record & CD Fair on 14 and 15 April – the biggest event of its kind in the world. Head to www.recordplanet.nl/en/ for further information.

DRONE HOME
23 February sees the reissue – complete with bonus tracks and new liner notes by Will Carruthers – of Spacemen 3's influential *Dreamweapon* album, via Superior Viaduct.

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Bella Union's record shop, nestling in Brighton's historic Lanes, could trigger a rejuvenation – if local planning issues weren't holding it back…

I lived happily in and around London for almost half a century, but following a run-in with a crooked landlord in Hackney and a growing discontent with city life, I decided – on a whim – to get out. With no plan of where to go, my wife and I jumped on a train to Brighton and within minutes, we'd fallen in love with the sea air, coffee shops and stunning buildings of Brighton and Hove.

We never went back to London. Brighton's not just become our home, it's become the centre of our work too. While our label offices remain in Shoreditch, we built a studio here and, in May 2016, Bella Union opened a vinyl shop down a narrow, cobbled alleyway near the seafront, part of the historic Lanes. In a lane of 16 properties, we are the only shop. Our vinyl store is – in keeping with the other properties in Ship Street Gardens – tiny, with a small voice; from the outset we'd hoped to begin a revitalisation of this neglected part of the city. Like many great towns, however, getting things done in Brighton – with its 21 wards and 54 councillors – can be a slow process. I don't doubt the sincerity, but the unwieldy platform of local government rarely produces swift action.

Not too many businesses have thrived in this dark, narrow vein, yet we began with real optimism in our vision and hoped our arrival would signal the birth of other small, creative outlets. Local residents warned us warmly that they'd been here many times before when newcomers arrived; a fresh wave of enthusiasm, followed by a tsunami of apathy.

Undeterred, we engaged swiftly with two councillors, who seemed excited about our arrival. To our great surprise, they were also fans of the label and, at the initial meetings, ideas were embraced and our concerns noted. I'll give you a brief picture: the alley, known here as a 'twitten', runs between two busy streets maybe 200 yards from the seafront and pretty close to Brighton pier. At night, it is dark, Dickensian and rather seedy. In daylight, it's intriguing, a place you might imagine an old antique bookshop would be found, or a barber's. Or indeed a tiny record shop. This twitten has been in Brighton since at least the 1750s and we know there was an antique shop in 1900 run by Henry James Vaughan. There are picturesque houses on either side of the alley, some in better shape than others, inhabited mostly by lovely, artistic community-spirited people. It's approximately 100 yards long, dominated on one side by a single boarded-up property that has remained empty for over four years. It was previously occupied by a large dental surgery. The boards are regularly damaged through attempted break-ins, and yet, despite years of neglect and the repeated vandalism, it is on the market for rent at £52,000 a year. The terms of the lease state it can only be… 'a dentistry'. So it failed as a dentist's surgery, but can only be rented by other dentists? It will remain empty.

In May 2016, Bella Union opened a vinyl shop down a narrow, cobbled alleyway near the seafront – we'd hoped to begin a revitalisation of this neglected part of the city

We discussed with the aforementioned friendly councillors the folly and incomprehensibility of all these scenarios: plans were put in place to serve notice on the owner to improve the property for a number of reasons. Talks were held about improved lighting, the crack dealing in the alley and how to deter the daily daubs of graffiti that greet our arrival at work each day… But nothing happened.

While the graffiti in the alley is rarely good enough to even be classified as 'street art', it still shows way more imagination than the council have in resolving the problem. When one in every 69 people in Brighton is homeless, private and corporate greed such as this, where ludicrous terms are inserted into a lease to simply avoid renting the property or having to convert it, makes my blood boil. Even if, for two months over the coldest periods in our weather-beaten city, they opened it up as a shelter, indeed anything that showed some community spirit, I'd feel marginally less inclined to join ranks with Occupy Brighton, break in myself and start a sit-in!

I feel 2018 really needs to be a year of action, but despite our best intentions, our vinyl shop looks set to remain the only retail spot in our little cobblestoned backstreet. Yet with our 2018 release schedule already more exciting than any 12-month period in our 20-year history, I doubt I'll have time to get this nagging toothache seen to. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***is currently in Lost Horizons and was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins. He founded the independent record label Bella Union.***

#10 Pure Comedy

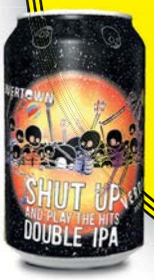
Father John Misty

Josh Tillman's third album as Father John Misty, 2017's *Pure Comedy*, was a wry, cutting and at times hilarious observation of 21st-century life. For the sleeve, he needed a similarly multifarious image. Enter cartoonist Edward Steed, best known for his work in *The New Yorker*, to deliver a hugely detailed illustration brimming with depictions of humanity in all its forms. It was Steed's first album-cover design and, working with pen and ink to create a series of separate images that could be combined for the final piece, it took him a week to complete. He was inspired by Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch's *Ship Of Fools,* and the Deluxe 2LP version, pressed on aluminium and copper vinyl, features a die-cut customisable jacket with four interactive background sleeves, enabling listeners to change the colour of the sky depending on their mood. "I suppose the unifying theme is the absurdity of human life on earth," said Steed. "I just drew the type of album cover I would want if I made an album, which I never will."

Now Spinning

Check out the 12 essential tracks on our turntable this month, while enjoying Shut Up And Play The Hits – a collaboration between Verdant Brewing Co and Beavertown Brewery that's a double-IPA banger with a sweet mango explosion.

1 Greystone Chapel – Johnny Cash (Columbia)
2 Two Silver Trees – Calexico (Quarterstick)
3 Best Friend – Belle And Sebastian (Matador)
4 Azzaman – Imarhan (City Slang)
5 Timber – Coldcut (Ninja Tune)
6 Look At Your Hands – Tune-Yards (4AD)
7 Each Time We Pass – Hookworms (Domino)
8 Baby, Let Me Follow You Down – The Band Ft. Bob Dylan (Rhino)
9 Hold On – Tom Waits (ANTI-)
10 Over The Midnight – Jonathan Wilson (Bella Union)
11 Teenage Lobotomy – Ramones (Rhino)
12 Come, Gone – Sonny Rollins (Craft Recordings)



Haus Of Card

For many vinyl fans, the packaging is as important as the music. But what if the packaging *was* the music? This is the question posed by LA duo Dosshaus on debut release *Paper-Thin Hotel*, out now as a double 7" single in a limited edition of 300. "It's the first officially released record to be made entirely of cardboard," their label, Sympathy For The Record Industry, explains. "Dosshaus invites would-be listeners to experience the artwork of *Paper-Thin Hotel* and imagine their own music, giving everyone a unique, subjective experience."

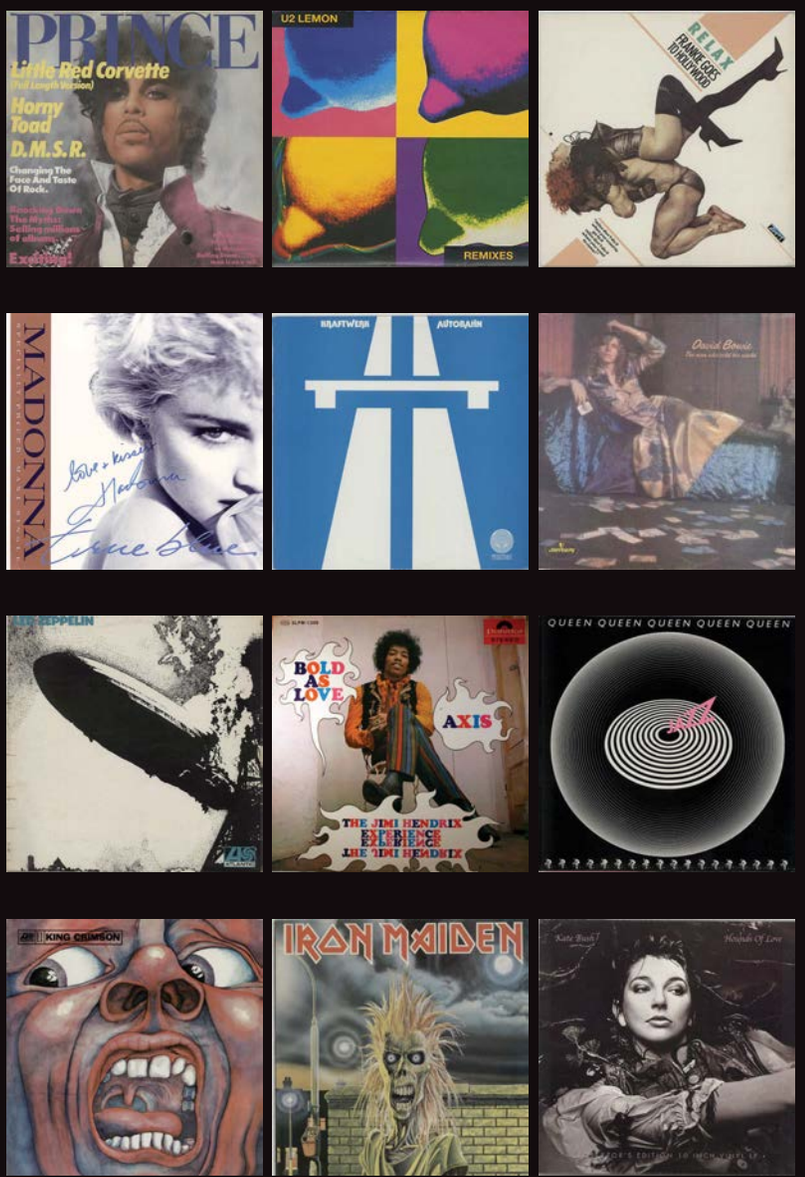
NEEDLE IN THE HAY

One of the directors of Australia's infamous indie label Spunk Records, Aaron Curnow, is a guest judge in this year's Needle In The Hay competition. Run by Aussie style magazine *Happy*, it's the only competition for bands and musicians we know of which offers vinyl pressing as a prize. To enter, go to hhhhappy.com/needle-in-the-hay-enter and submit the name of your band and a link to your best song to be in with a chance of winning the first prize: "250 copies of your single pressed on vinyl, with full-colour packaging and a high-production live-video recording."

buying or selling vinyl?

since 1987, the 991.com team has been buying & selling vinyl. we always want mint condition LPs, EPs, 45s, CDs, posters, programmes, music memorabilia & more.

from the Classic Pop to the obscure: 80's, 70's, 60's pop & rock prog, psych, blues, folk & jazz.



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On The Radar

SUMIE

Swedish singer-songwriter gets *Lost In Light* on lambent follow-up

After the success of her affecting, autobiographical self-titled debut album, Sandra Sumie Nagano turned the microscope on the innermost feelings of other people with her follow-up, *Lost In Light*, released via Bella Union in November. The Gothenburg singer-songwriter, whose father was born in Japan and sister Yukimi fronts Little Dragon, found inspiration in a tranche of letters from the First and Second World Wars, and that wealth of emotion is a rich seam running through an enchanting record that is subtly cinematic, borrowing stylistically from Scandinavian and Japanese folk music.

"I read letters from migrants from Sweden who were going to the States and leaving everything," Nagano tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "They wrote in their letters about how they loved somebody and would miss them. There was so much power in those letters, because they didn't live in this fast time in which we live. They couldn't text each other, they put a lot of heart into those letters and it was amazing to me to fall back on that time and see how people expressed their love for each other, knowing they maybe wouldn't see each other again.

"Now everything moves really fast. It's tragic, but very beautiful, in a way, to see how people express themselves not having anything other than a pen and paper. I got really inspired by reading those letters and how poetic people are."

Lost In Light was recorded in the studio of producer Filip Leyman, known for his more expansive work with fellow Swedish artist Anna Von Hausswolff. Nagano explains that such a collision of styles made for a greater whole.

"It was great to work with Filip. He's a very bombastic producer. Coming from where I came from, that's quite different – I wanted to try something different, even if this album is very subtle. It was also interesting for Filip to work with me, as he had to tone down things and find small ways to have his expression. He's a great guy and I hope we can work together again."

Nagano, who fell in love with vinyl as a teenager and dreamed of working in her local record shop in Gothenburg, found her way to Bella Union through an exchange of messages on MySpace. "I was born in 1974 and would go after school to this record shop, which doesn't exist anymore, really close to where I lived," she recalls. "They had headphones so you could listen to albums, and that would be the favourite part of my day. I'd save money to buy albums, and I still have them. At that point, when I was 12 or 13, I was really into Prince and Madonna, and then somebody put a record on and it was Billie Holiday… It was a great place to float away, I always had a dream about working in that store. I love record stores, I always have.

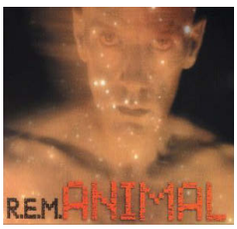
"I was really a pop girl, growing up in the 80s. As a kid, I was very much into musicals. I loved Julie Andrews and *The Sound Of Music* and that's what I wanted to become. Then I got into jazz as a teenager – Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Chet Baker… I could always listen to those records and find something new, some new nuance in their singing.

"Bella Union have been everything. When I found the label and the artists they had, a new horizon came up for me – music I hadn't heard in Gothenburg. I always had a dream to release an album that I could be proud of, and the support I've had from Bella Union has been amazing."

Sumie's album Lost In Light is out now on Bella Union ●

CRATE DIGGING WITH... Embrace

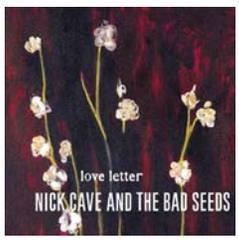
Embrace head out on tour this month in support of their March album release, *Love Is A Basic Need* (available on coloured vinyl in gatefold sleeve, standard black vinyl and cassette editions). The band's lead singer, Danny McNamara, joined us for a cratedigging session to pull out some of his most influential singles and albums…



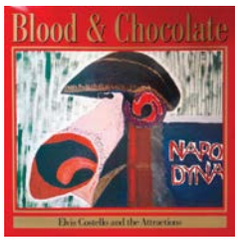
R.E.M.
SO. CENTRAL RAIN (I'M SORRY) (LIVE)
"Just a B-side, but one of the most incredible vocals I've ever heard. I was about 16 and hearing this made me think I wasn't alone. Don't worry about how it comes across, just sing from the heart…"

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
ROLLERCOASTER
"I love the unbridled fun and joy in this. I was going to London for the *Q* Awards and Ian [McCulloch] sold me his first-class train ticket cheap. At least I think that's what happened – it was all a bit hazy…"

PJ HARVEY
NAKED COUSIN
"I saw her in Copenhagen and it was the best concert I've ever seen. We were playing the same place the day after. The gig was almost a religious experience and it's probably the most affected I have ever been by a concert."



NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS
LOVE LETTER
"I could have picked a dozen different songs, but this one pips it to the post for me. I've definitely been the guy who's fucked up and then tried to make it better by writing a letter. It didn't work."



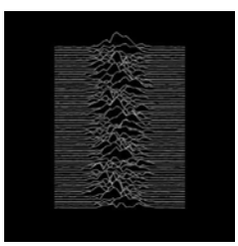
ELVIS COSTELLO
I WANT YOU
"This is one of those songs I only get out on special occasions. Filed under 'Most Obsessive Lyric', it floors me every time. I can't understand why there aren't more songs like this. Everything else is a waste of breath…"

SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
EVERYBODY IS A STAR
"Originally the B-side to 1970's *Thank You*, this is the song I might put on first thing and dance around the house in my pants to. Everyone should have at least one of those in their collection."

RADIOHEAD
A MOON SHAPED POOL
"Just when you think they've peaked, they release another album and get ever better. I'm obsessed with this record. I don't know if it's the best album of all time, because we haven't had all the time yet, but it's a contender."

RIDE
IN A DIFFERENT PLACE
"The record [*Nowhere*] that made me want to be in a band. This sounds so effortless and primal. On that first album, it's like they're reinventing the wheel and doing a better, more elegant job of it."

U2
OUT OF CONTROL
"I remember singing this in the storeroom at the bottom of the garden when me and Ric were just kids. Bono dedicated it to me at a gig in Birmingham. I wasn't expecting it and I was totally dumbstruck…"



JOY DIVISION
I REMEMBER NOTHING
"Astonishing band, and certainly the most missed of any I've mentioned here. More than any other artist, I wonder what might have been for them, had Ian not so tragically taken his life. Such a sad, sad loss." ●

IAN PEEL'S LINER NOTES

Double-grooved records. Have you ever come across one? It's a rarely seen pressing-plant trick that allows one side of a record to play two different tracks depending on nothing more than chance…

I first came across this clever – and surprisingly under-utilised – idea when browsing the record-store shelves one Saturday morning in 1986, looking for something inspiring, and different, to buy and take home with me. Although not particularly a fan of The Blow Monkeys, the 12" of their new single stood out: the soon-to-flop *Wicked Ways*.

This limited-edition version screamed 'Special Edition Double Grooved 4-Track 12"' across the sleeve, the artwork proclaiming that "Both sides of this limited edition have 2 Concentric Grooves With Completely Different Tracks".

This was obviously too much to resist, so I bought it and headed home to find out more. When it was on the turntable, I figured out what was going on. The band had delivered an extra track each for both the A- and B-side, and these had been cut into the record as well as the original A- and B-side songs, but ran as an extra, concentric groove alongside the original.

The band had delivered an extra track each for both the A- and B-side, and these had been cut into the record as an extra, concentric groove

The net result was that, to look at, the record was rammed with dense (and very shallow) grooves. Whereas, normally, you can pretty much see the gap between the grooves on a record with the naked eye, with this one, they were almost imperceptible. And how would I choose which track to play back? That depended entirely on which groove my needle sunk into first when I lowered the tonearm.

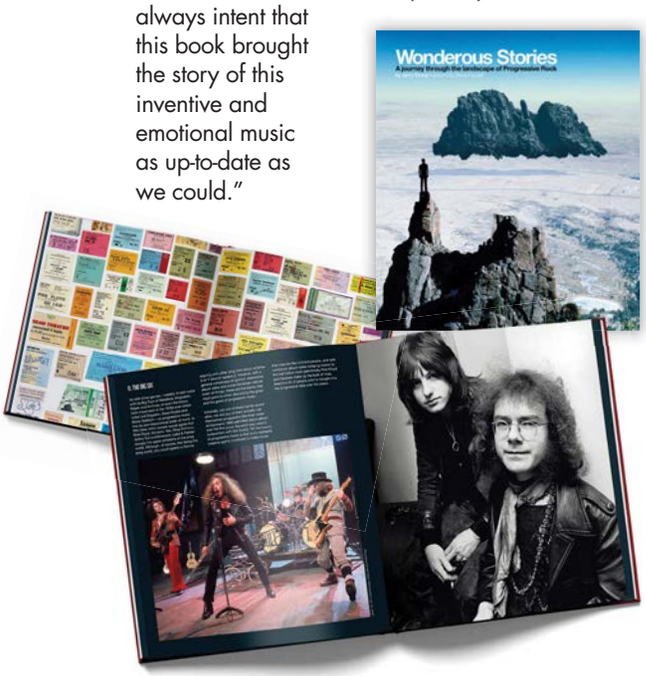
Of course, a clever format is nothing without great content. And three years later, I picked up my second double-grooved 12" which, this time, married this smart idea with wonderful music. It was the first single and title track from Kate Bush's *The Sensual World*. And between the grooves of the A-side, they'd pressed an instrumental of the same song. Which made for a very odd and quite ethereal playback experience: playing the A-side over and over again, sometimes I'd hear Kate's vocal weaving in and out of it, other times not.

That's where my collection of double-groove records ends, so I've done some digging to find out more. It seems that they were certainly at their height in that 1986-to-1989 period. There was a double-groove 12" of Michael Jackson's *The Way You Make Me Feel* in 1987 that fused the 7" remix with the A Cappella mix on the A-side. And 1989 saw a double-groove 7" of S'Express's *Mantra For A State Of Mind*. I also found that, not long after The Blow Monkeys' release, their label RCA put out a double-groove of another faltering signing, *Silvermac* by Westworld, with the exact same wording on the front cover.

So while these editions were clearly a marketing ploy for the likes of RCA Records, it's a trick that could be used to great creative effect by others, such as Kate Bush and Michael Jackson – intriguing examples of a format which, curiously, seems long forgotten. ●

Prog's Wonderous Stories

Wonderous Stories by Jerry Ewing is a new book on prog rock that places the genre in a modern context. "I've been frustrated by various media portraying the genre as if nothing happened after the 70s glory years," Ewing explains. "One only has to look at the success of Steven Wilson to see this is patently untrue. I was always intent that this book brought the story of this inventive and emotional music as up-to-date as we could."



STRANGE FRUIT

The Fruits De Mer label is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year in typically crackpot and collectable style. Schizo Fun Addict – the label's first-ever signing – will release a transparent red-vinyl edition of *The Sun Yard* EP "available for free to the first 150 people arriving at the label's anniversary party in Glastonbury on 12 May… followed by two more limited editions in full colour, handmade LP jackets featuring glow-in-the-dark images". See fruitsdemerrecords.com for more.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE VINYL

JOHNNY CASH AND THE TENNESSEE TWO

THE SUN YEARS

1984 UK limited-edition 5x mono LP boxset. Included is an LP-size booklet. The LPs are boxed inside a textured and gold-embossed picture box and in mint condition, this could fetch around £75.

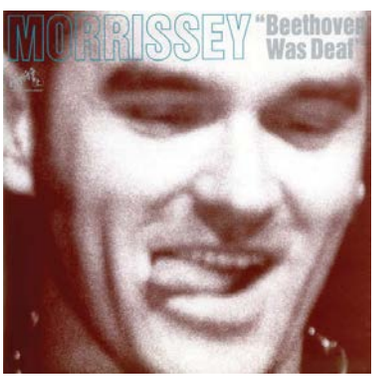
£ **£75**

THE ROLLING STONES

THE BEST LIVE HISTORY '65-66-69

1983 Japanese-only London label 14-track vinyl LP, back-pasted picture sleeve with metallicised title font plus fold-out lyric insert and black-and-white band photo obi-strip – fetching around £50 when this is included.

£ **£50**



MORRISSEY

BEETHOVEN WAS DEAF

Scarce original 1993 UK HMV 16-track live vinyl LP, housed in a gatefold picture sleeve. The album was mostly recorded at The Zenith in Paris on 22 December 1992 and at a date in London two nights before.

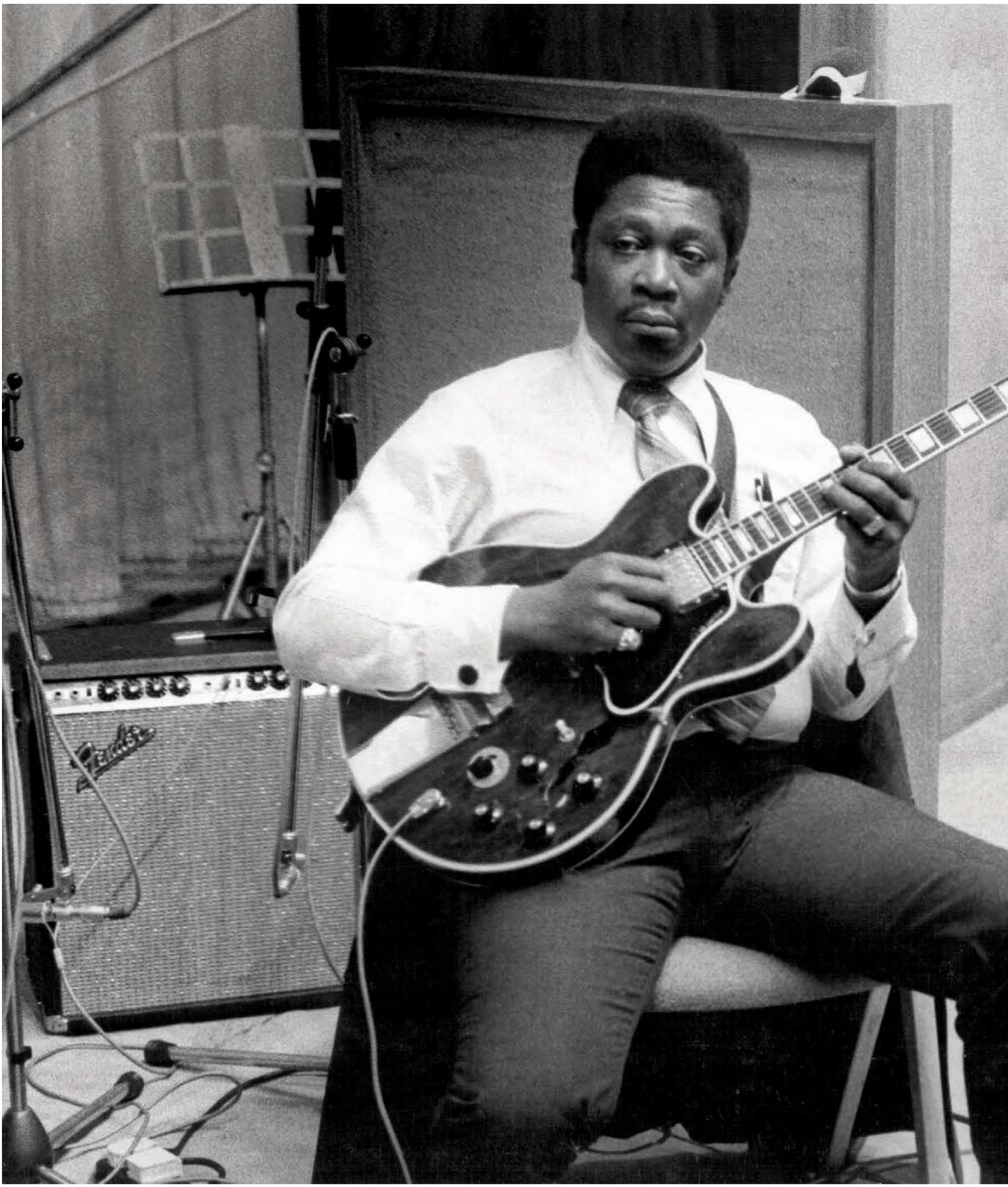
£ **£100**

PINK FLOYD

DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER

1988 UK 14-track double-vinyl LP, recorded live over five nights at the Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, New York in August. Issued in a gatefold picture sleeve, complete with illustrated credits inners.

£ **£125**



STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

B.B. KING

Olympic Studios 1971

A rueful B.B. King cradles Lucille during rehearsals for the *B.B. King – In London* album, recorded in June 1971 at the capital's Olympic Studios. The sessions for the eminent bluesman's 19th album featured a roll call of notable musicians from both sides of the Atlantic, including Ringo Starr, who can be seen stretching in the background. The former Beatle played on three tracks, and other rock royalty featured on the album's credits included King disciple Peter Green, Alexis Korner, Bobby Keys, Klaus Voormann and Steve Marriott, among many others. Conditions were certainly favourable, but despite the stellar supporting cast, quality production, wide-ranging instrumentation and King's road-honed voice and playing – which were both still in prime fettle – the LP remains an overlooked curio in the catalogue of the late, lamented King Of The Blues.

WHY I LOVE...

I Against I
Bad Brains

ERIC WILSON

Eric Wilson was the bass player with Sublime and Long Beach Dub Allstars. He tells *Why Vinyl Matters* author **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike** why a Bad Brains album has influenced him most…

"My dad was a jazz drummer. Though he mostly listened to jazz-radio stations, he still had a handful of records that were in the house when I was growing up. My first vinyl memory is seeing the Kiss *Destroyer* LP in his collection. I would stare at that album cover all day. It just sparked my imagination. I loved the pictures of the band in their spacesuits. I always thought it looked as if they were about to take over some intergalactic city, or something crazy like that. The other record art that really had an impact on me was The Billy Cobham/George Duke Band *"Live" On Tour In Europe* [from 1976]; Billy Cobham was the drummer from the Mahavishnu Orchestra. The album had Cobham and Duke's heads superimposed onto their hands; their hands were their bodies. It was completely different than the Kiss album, but similarly, it weirded people out.

"Growing up in Southern California, going to the record store was a ritual; getting all of your money together, going and buying an album, listening to it with your friends. Vinyl played a role in the whole ethos of the punk and ska scenes. You could look at all the artwork and read the lyrics of the songs. You would find out the names of the band members, and could see what they looked like; if you were at a gig, that is how you would know them if you saw them walking around.

SKA WARES

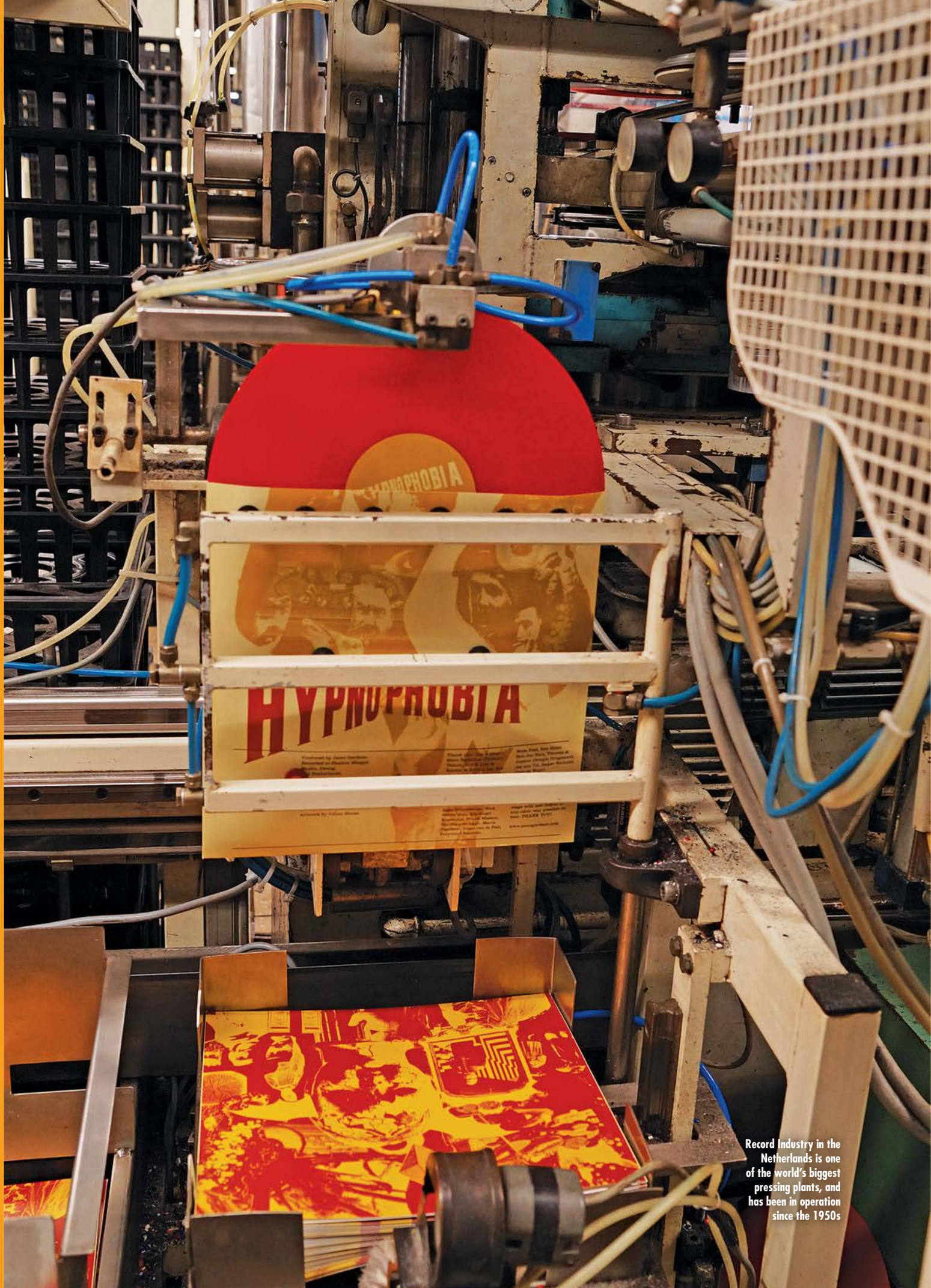
"The first album I really remember owning was *Millions Of Dead Cops* by [American hardcore punk band] MDC. I think I was 15 years old when I bought it. I actually used my parents' money to get it! Today, it's considered a classic punk album, but they released the record on their own label with help from Alternative Tentacles [a Bay Area indie label run by the Dead Kennedys' Jello Biafra]. I was getting really into punk rock, and it was one of the cooler bands to listen to. The album had a lot of rad pictures to look at, and the cover is amazing too, it has an almost graffiti-like militant style to it.

"The first ska albums that I got were all of those English ska bands: The English Beat, The Specials, stuff like that. That was before I even realised that ska came from Jamaica; I didn't know any better! I remember looking at the pictures of The Specials, listening to their records. That's how I got ideas for how to dress, how to sound…

"The one singular album that has influenced me more than any other has to be Bad Brains' 1986 album, *I Against I*. It was the first album I owned by them. We all wanted to be the Bad Brains more than anything back then. The *I Against I* album gave us [founding members of Sublime] the idea to mix different styles of music together. On that LP, Bad Brains would play a metal song, then go into a punk cut and follow that with a reggae tune. Bad Brains covered all of those genres across one of their albums; we tried to mix all of these sounds into one song and make it listenable. I'm definitely still influenced by Bad Brains. I still put them on often.

"*I Against I* would have to be in my top three records for anyone building a decent record collection to pick up. I also would have to say people should get Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Put that album on and sync it up with the beginning of the original *Wizard Of Oz* movie. That record totally corresponds to what is going on in the various scenes of the film. I'm pretty sure the band did it on purpose; there are too many coincidences to have not planned it. Also, get some Butthole Surfers on vinyl. They're my current favourite; I've been listening to them constantly, lately." ●

"I AGAINST I WOULD HAVE TO BE IN MY TOP THREE RECORDS FOR ANYONE'S COLLECTION"



Record Industry in the Netherlands is one of the world's biggest pressing plants, and has been in operation since the 1950s

PRESSING CONCERNS

With demand for vinyl at a 25-year high, a new breed of pressing plant is springing up – but there are challenges, too, in providing not only quantity, but quality. **Ben Wardle** visits three of these manufacturers to find out what the future holds for our beloved format

"About five years ago, I was looking to take on apprentices. I'd interviewed a young lad and offered him an engineering apprenticeship and he was full of beans and really excited. He went home and told his mum and dad that he was coming to work at a record-pressing plant and they stopped him doing it. They thought there was no future in it."

Five years later, Adam Teskey, manufacturing director at The Vinyl Factory, is in the middle of giving me a guided tour of his domain. Those parents would be kicking themselves now if they learned that Adam's business has seen a 20% year-on-year increase in production for the last four years. The British Phonographic Industry reported that, by the end of 2017, UK music fans had purchased four million albums on vinyl – the highest figure since the early 90s.

But this success comes at a price. As demand for vinyl goes up; as the grocery vinyl market soaks up the seemingly insatiable demand for *Rumours* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and every mainstream act from Adele to Young Thug expects a vinyl artefact for fans to look at while streaming, just where are all these records getting manufactured? And where are all the skilled technicians who know how to operate the machinery?

MACHINE LEARNING

Alex Wordsworth works at Key Production, who specialise in placing vinyl orders from record labels with pressing plants across the UK and Europe. He's able to put some perspective on the situation: "Installation, maintenance and operation of printing and pressing equipment are jobs that require skill and knowledge that can't be acquired in an instant. There are so many factors involved in pressing vinyl – steam, heat, mechanics, chemical compounds, manual labour, a delicate touch – all these things require training and most, if not all, plants and printers will be constantly training up new people to take over from some of the 'old hands'."

Across the road from The Vinyl Factory's Hayes location, you can still see the old 'His Master's Voice' building, from which records by The Beatles, Pink Floyd and Queen once emerged in freshly pressed form. The building and its surrounding outhouses are currently, according to the publicity blurb, being 're-imagined and remastered' into offices, flats and a shopping centre, collectively called The Old Vinyl Factory. The whole place looks like a pop-music theme park, with Nipper The Dog sculptures, huge murals of screaming Beatles fans and famous song titles painted over all available walls. Homage or exploitation: take your pick.

Over the road, in a squat, scaffold-covered building, is where actual records are made. Back in 2001, The Vinyl Factory bought EMI's manufacturing equipment. The machinery in question is the world-renowned EMI 1400 automated press, built by EMI in its own Machinery Supply Room in Hayes in the late 1960s. "They made hundreds and hundreds, and it went all around the world to different EMI plants," says Teskey.

The company had a two-year deal to continue manufacturing EMI's dwindling orders, after which they were on their own in a business considered in its last days. Teskey joined a few years after that. "We had a very loyal client base – they stuck with us and we stuck with them," he says. According to Adam, around 2011 was "when it all started to pick back up". He shows us his detailed daily production figures: "Right now, I'm not even halfway through November and I'm already above [2011], with three months of the financial year to go!"

SHIP SHAPE

But with all this antiquated machinery supplying the new demand, there must be pressures. Who, for example, knows how to work the 50-year-old EMI 1400s? "Ian has been making records man-and-boy – he's in his 60s now," says Teskey, describing one of the three engineers he has in his 25 staff. "I've worked really hard over the past five years in getting our average age down. Ian taught Dino, who's now the engineer if a press goes wrong. He was an engineer on ocean-going ships; you've got to know your stuff to keep a ship on the water. There's no backup when you're in the middle of the ocean; you've got to fix things. So he applies that mentality to his work here – there's no phone call down the road. I employ his cousin now, who worked on another ship!"

Around the plant, everyone seems happy and driven; I'm introduced to smiling men and women who are press operators or supervisors, as well as packers and office staff. It's a tightly run business, which looks well set for the future of vinyl's increasing popularity – so does Adam have any plans to expand? "We've got more gear, but it's quite contentious to visualise the market in five years' time – we don't want to play with people's lives, open up a massive behemoth of a factory, take on lots of people and then if the market doesn't grow, have to get rid of those people. There's a duty of care when you're employing people."

With four times as many staff as The Vinyl Factory, Dutch-based company Record Industry bills itself as 'Europe's Vinyl Pressing Plant', with good reason: "80% of what we press goes outside the Netherlands," says owner Ton Vermeulen. The plant has been going since the late 1950s, with Vermeulen taking over in 1998. Does he have problems with finding and keeping staff? "We just train new people on the job," he says. "Most of the time, it's clear within a week or two if people are able to do the job. If they don't mind it being a bit warm in the press shop and they're not afraid of machines, we teach them how to press a record…" Vermeulen's relaxed manner suggests that finding and training up new staff in the Netherlands might be an easier prospect than elsewhere, perhaps.

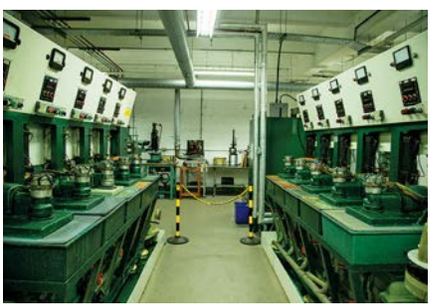
> "IF PEOPLE DON'T MIND IT BEING WARM AND THEY'RE NOT AFRAID OF MACHINES, WE TEACH THEM HOW TO PRESS A RECORD"

Back in the UK, there's a new kid on the block: Portsmouth-based Vinyl Presents. How did owner Darren Fudge find his staff? "I know that in order for me to succeed in this, I have to understand every single aspect of what is going on, so I decided I was going to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the first three months. I'm the one doing Quality Control, shrinkwrapping, mixing the PVC. I also do all the quotes, all the PR stuff, I log all the deliveries…" But surely he must have some staff? "I was very lucky to find my press engineer, Phil East. He's been in the industry all his life. He'd been working in Canada and the business he was at folded, so he was coming back to the UK. He started here a couple of months later. I'm looking for people to shadow Phil at the moment."

WHAT WE DO WHEN WE SHADOW

The process of 'shadowing', a vinyl-pressing apprenticeship, is echoed by all my interviewees. It's new blood that's required, not necessarily expertise. As Teskey says: "You're not going to advertise for an engineer with experience of record pressing in this day and age. It would be a waste of an advert!" He has a routine for all new staff, which involves them understanding every part of the vinyl-production process: "There's no point just understanding a little bit. Our current production supervisor would have started on the presses as a look/see, shadowing the actual operator. She'd then go on to putting the metal stampers in, which is quite a delicate process in itself. Over a period of time, the supervisor will decide if

This page: various views from inside The Vinyl Factory in Hayes, West London



10 STEPS TO VINYL HEAVEN
HOW TO CUT A RECORD

Portsmouth's Vinyl Presents is a relative newcomer to the vinyl-pressing industry

1 A cutting or mastering engineer, like Miles Showell (he's cut everyone from The Beatles to Amy Winehouse) cuts electric analogue signals into an aluminium disc coated in acetate lacquer* – using a record-cutting machine called a lathe with a sapphire stylus. The process looks like someone playing a record, except the disc starts off smooth and ends up with a concentric groove containing all the music. Both sides of the record will have a lacquer of its own.

2 The lacquers are now sent to the pressing plant. Each lacquer is first cleaned of any grease, then a thin layer of silver is sprayed on to make it electrically conductive for the next stage – known to some in the business as galvanics.

3 The silver lacquer is placed in an electroplating bath for three-to-four hours so it gets nickel-plated. When the plating is thick enough, it is separated from the original lacquer. This new nickel disc is called the Negative because, of course, it is a reverse imprint – the grooves are now ridges.

4 Each Negative now has the same electroplating process done to it to make a positive nickel copy. This is known as the Mother. The negative (also called the Metal Master) is now archived as a backup.

5 The Mother is played and checked for faults, after which it is placed back into the electroplating bath to make the nickel stampers. For larger pressing runs, more than one set of stampers are made from the mother. Depending on the quality of the stampers, between 1,000 and 1,500 copies of a record can be made before it is discarded.

6 The stampers are now placed in position on the press – one on each side, so that the machine can be closed like a hi-hat around the inserted piece of soft vinyl.

7 To get this soft vinyl, small PVC beads or pellets are poured, via a hopper, into a heating machine called an extruder. The pellets are melted into small burger-pattie shapes, each of which is called a puck. The record labels (printed on special heat-resistant paper) are placed on either side of the puck.

8 The hydraulic press (which is steam driven) now pushes the stampers together over the puck at high pressure (150 bar). It takes 20 seconds, during which the squashed vinyl edges poking outside of the press are trimmed off.

9 Depending on the factory setup, the finished record either gets automatically bagged into its inner sleeve, or is hand-bagged. It is then left to cool: 140g vinyl needs three hours to cool down, 180g needs eight.

10 Once the vinyl is cooled, it's ready for putting into its sleeve, shrinkwrapping, stickering and whizzing off to your favourite record store.

A view of Record Industry's shop floor

***Direct Metal Mastering** is where the disc is copper rather than lacquer plated. Some people argue that it is better for albums and specifically classical music; others say that acetate lacquers result in a warmer, less-sharp sound.

Record Industry has 33 presses and can produce up to 50,000 records per day

they're ready to run their own presses. Then they'll have a look/see basically shadowing what they're doing."

Finding expertise in the electroplating or galvanics field (see boxout) can be difficult, though. Fudge describes searching for a UK company to help him: "I went to 12 different galvanics companies, and what I found was vinyl pressing in the UK is a very closed door, almost mafia-esque. Nobody would speak to me! I couldn't get to see anybody; it was very weird. They don't seem to talk to each other, or help each other." To provide the lacquer-to-master process, he now uses a US company "who were head and shoulders above anybody else in terms of quality".

Indeed, everyone we speak to in researching this piece emphasises the point of quality over quantity. Teskey: "There's no excuse for making records which aren't world class." Fudge agrees: "We hand-check every single record for flaws or mistakes, then we hand-sleeve and hand-shrinkwrap. The way that I'm approaching it is that there will be other players who will come onboard, who might undercut me financially, but if I can get my books full of key clients who love us, then why would they go anywhere else?"

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BEING FLEXI?

Gone are the days in the 80s when manufacturers regularly pressed using such small amounts of vinyl that the resulting records were, in the words of Teskey, "doing a good impression of a flexi disc". Back then, they would often also save money by recycling vinyl, causing nasty background noise. On Vermeulen's Record Industry website, it states that the PVC compound they use "has the lowest surface noise known in the vinyl industry".

For all three of these very different companies, business is booming. "I want to take baby steps with this business," says Fudge, "but we're working at full capacity already! We haven't had to advertise – my phone just keeps on ringing and ringing." Vermeulen echoes him: "The last four years, we have grown 30-40% per year. From 5.4 million to 10.3 million records this year." Key Production's Wordsworth presents an overall industry picture: "At the moment, [vinyl] doesn't show any signs of slowing down – whether it's major-label catalogue reissues, new releases by established artists, or a tiny indie label pressing a limited run – the demand is clearly there."

"As a business, it's only going to go up," says Fudge. "I currently have two automated presses here and part of my business plan is to have six by the middle of next year. The resurgence at the moment is huge. I think this has got many years ahead of it."

Back in Hayes, I ask Teskey about vinyl's recent boom. As someone who's seen the lows and highs of the vinyl business, he's understandably sanguine. "It has to plateau – we can't keep going on the trajectory we're on, we'll be on 1960s volume in about four or five years! If it kept on growing, it would end up higher than it's ever been, which we all know can't happen." He also recognises the fragility of the whole industry. "There are only two people in the world who make the base lacquers," he reminds us, "and there's only one mill that makes record-label paper."

We walk out of The Vinyl Factory's modest building and find ourselves once again staring at the frenetic building site of The Old Vinyl Factory over the road. With all this new-found interest in a once-forgotten format, as new presses are manufactured and old practices are reintroduced, it's comforting to know that someone such as Teskey has stuck to his guns. He concludes: "You can have the music for not a lot of money, so you're buying vinyl for a totally different reason. Which is exciting." ●

"THERE ARE ONLY TWO PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO MAKE THE BASE LACQUERS, AND ONE MILL THAT MAKES RECORD-LABEL PAPER"

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THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Since the mid 2000s, the steady rise of Tune-Yards from cult lo-fi DIY indie-folksters to critics' favourites has thankfully seen Merrill Garbus lose none of her amazingly creative drive to experiment. **Chris Parkin** finds out more about the themes behind fourth album *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life…*

Merrill Garbus is a musical hoarder. She grew up in New York and Connecticut listening to The Rolling Stones, US folk-rockers Indigo Girls and South African anti-apartheid musician Johnny Clegg. Her folk-musician parents taught her about traditional American music and English country song and dance, including – whisper it – Morris dancing. She's been exploring the sounds and rituals of Kenya, Haiti and beyond for years and her genre-defying albums are neon-bright catherine wheels of pan-global psychedelic pop. But until recently, there was one form of vibrant music that Garbus had no room or use for: electronic dance music and, in particular, UK acid house. "But I did watch *24 Hour Party People*!" she protests.

Garbus sounds a little sheepish when, on the phone from her home in Oakland, California, she tells us of her old intolerance of club music. "So much EDM… like, we go to these festivals and I would question, are people just on drugs? Do they hear how bad this music is?" But she doesn't tar all dance music with the same brush any longer. In a prolonged break between Tune-Yards' last album, 2014's *Nikki Nack*, and her new (fourth) album *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*, Garbus learned to DJ and lost herself in Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's essential book about club culture, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*. For her, reading how rave culture was as much about protest and creating a utopia as it was about chemical-induced partying was an epiphany. "Learning about house and techno, and where this music comes from, and rave's Summer Of Love – the UK's 1967 – was so inspiring," Garbus says of that late-80s youth movement. "Change was happening on the dancefloor and love was the centrepiece of it all. It was an ecstatic experience, something people wanted to head into, whereas so much politics these days is repellent. People are running away from getting involved and from engaging with it at all, because it feels so overwhelming. That scene is so compelling to me."

Her prejudice finally speared, Garbus has since delved deep into electronic music, both old and new, and this has given Tune-Yards' new album a fresh, propulsive energy. House euphoria, cosmic techno, disco grooves and bubbling synths are all constants, however subtle, in a warm patchwork that seamlessly knits together Haitian rhythms, African melodies, indie pop and new-age electronics. Exploring the transcendental power of electronic music with her accomplice Nate Brenner, tripping out to drum machines and synthesisers, helped Garbus to carry the heavy lyrical themes that dominate *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*. ▶

Tune-Yards: Nate Brenner and Merrill Garbus

"I WAS DISGUSTED WITH THE SOUND OF MY VOICE AND ALL THAT IT CARRIES WITH IT"

"Music stressed me out for a while there," Garbus explains. "I'd be at the studio alone trying to write lyrics or a melody, or singing these words and I'd be so disgusted with myself. I really mean it when I sing that I don't want to hear my voice on the track *Private Life*. I was disgusted with the sound of my voice and all that it carries with it.

"That's natural when we start to engage with how we're part of oppression, but then, what do we do with that? I needed the music to propel me to more exploration, to embolden me instead of me shrivelling in fear and disgust. So there's a lot of 'let's dance the fuck out'!"

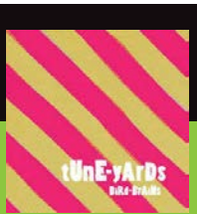
NEW ENGAGEMENT

No one needs reminding how things have fared for the world since Garbus and Tune-Yards were last active four years ago. Indeed, it's tempting to re-imagine 2014 as a land of milk and honey. Except it wasn't – and on *Nikki Nack*'s *Stop That Man*, and *Doorstep*, from Tune-Yards' 2011 album *w h o k i l l*, Garbus zoned in on the problem of police brutality. Alongside the treadmill of calamity we've been on since 2014, those two tracks, and Garbus' experience of performing them live, set her on the soul-searching path that enabled her to write *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life* in the first half of 2016.

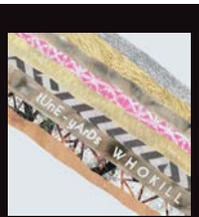
The memory of one New York concert in 2014 still makes Garbus wince. Coinciding with the huge Black Lives Matter protests after Eric Garner died having been restrained by the city's police, Garbus suddenly felt uncomfortable playing *Doorstep* and *Stop That Man*. "It just felt like whatever we were trying to do with music, it wasn't doing it. We just weren't engaging with it. We played *Doorstep* that night, and it felt like either we play it and it feels relevant, or we play it and it feels like a confused white person trying to understand the black experience. We haven't played that song since."

ABC 123

Tune-Yards' previous three albums…



Bird-Brains
2009
An intimate first effort, performed and produced alone, sans bass, using rudimentary software, loop pedals and a voice recorder. It's a clunky outsider-folk album full of household objects, ratty field recordings, thrashed ukulele and Garbus' cathartic warbling.



whokill
2011
Tune-Yards' assertive second was an FX-assisted leap on from the lo-fi sound of its predecessor, propelled by zippy Afrobeat grooves and mutations of psych-folk, feral R&B and indie funk. Garbus brought her politics to the fore on these seriously soulful tracks, too.

Nikki Nack
2014
Album number three saw Garbus distilling the frenzy of ideas from her first two albums into a leaner and more precise sound. The tumbling percussion and climactic cacophonies didn't vanish, but vulnerability crept into Tune-Yards' most captivating and heartfelt songs yet.

The discomfort Garbus felt that night knocked her for six. It made her question everything she thought she was doing to try to engage with the world, from singing about racial inequality to studying Haitian Easter rituals, and she came to the conclusion – a little harshly, perhaps – that she was "just another white musician whitewashing black culture for white people". It was this painful, disillusioning experience, along with everything else going on in the US at the time, which kickstarted a process of reflection that resulted in *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*. As well as learning to DJ and exploring dance music, Garbus kept a journal "voicing really ugly stuff that I wouldn't want anyone else to see", read up on whiteness and the Sixth Extinction, and meditated at a centre led by people with different racial backgrounds to her own.

"I wanted to understand how growing up white in this country has affected me," she says. Without hectoring, Garbus asks compelling questions throughout the album about gentrification and social displacement, racial and gender equality, climate change and, most notably on *Colonizer* and *Private Life*, concepts of whiteness and the role it plays in the world's many messes. She's unapologetic about this. "People don't talk ▶

about anything in music any more," Garbus says, provocatively. "Like, are we talking about love and relationships again? I get annoyed with myself for being so direct – and people have critiqued that, like the lyrics are too obvious, too conversational – but if I'm naming things that tend not to get named in pop music, that's okay by me."

"PEOPLE DON'T TALK ABOUT ANYTHING IN MUSIC ANY MORE. LIKE, ARE WE TALKING ABOUT LOVE AGAIN?"

PROTEST SONGS

During their extended hibernation, Garbus and Brenner – now a fully fledged member of Tune-Yards – didn't just smooth over their sound, turning the chaotic, poster-paint splatter of old into something with focus and depth. Garbus' lyric writing evolved, too. Hyper-aware of what she calls the "barely formed reflections" on previous Tune-Yards albums, as well as her tendency for word-soup splurges, the lyrics on *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life* are precision-tooled and efficient. There are no knee-jerk reactions. "It's counterintuitive, because it's a time when we need to take action and be present in the streets and protest," Garbus says, explaining the longer than usual gestation period of *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life* in a roundabout way.

"But at the same time, I saw a lot of protests go awry, people unaware of their impact. I went on a women's march and I saw it walk over a homeless encampment as if it didn't exist. I thought: 'I need to slow down'. There's so much that happens as a casualty of not being aware."

However nuanced outspoken lyrics are, though, they can still make people switch off, which is why Garbus and Brenner have made the new album Tune-Yards' grooviest, most danceable record to date. It's an album energised not just by electronic music and tough questions, but also by the late-80s and early-90s African music that dominates Garbus' vinyl collection, including Odion Iruoje's *Down To Earth* album; and the better-living-through-dreaming philosophy of Afrofuturism thinkers such as sci-fi writer Octavia E Butler. Garbus thinks change will arrive only if we question and explore, a belief that fuels her new album.

"It feels like we need so many new answers to so many new things," she says. "I'm constantly worried that music is pointless and that it has no business in social change. So I'm in constant pursuit of, like, if we can open up avenues sonically, maybe, somehow, that's going to open up other things, too." And if it doesn't? Well, then we can just "dance the fuck out" to this fine album. ●

The *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life* album cover

[PIAS] ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BLACKEST RAINBOW SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • CODA
PHONICA LONDON • POLAR BEAR BIRMINGHAM • PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY • ROUGH TRADE BRISTOL • ROUGH TRADE LONDON • ROUGH TRADE NOTTINGHAM • SEISMIC LEAMINGTON SPA • SISTER RAY LONDON • SLIDE BEDFORD • SOUNDCLASH NORWICH • SOUND IT OUT STOCKTON ON TEES • SOUND KNOWLEDGE MALBOROUGH • SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHESTERFILED • TOWER DUBLIN • TRANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLUTION EDINBURGH • VENUS VINYL LONDON • VINYL COLLECTORS SALISBURY • VINYL HUNTER BURY ST EDMUNDS • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD •MONORAIL GLASGOW • MUSIC NOT DEAD BEXHILL ON SEA • NIGHTFLY RECORDS UXBRIDGE • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • MUSIC EDINBURGH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRASH LEEDS • CULT HERO BRIGHTON • DAVID'S LETCHWORTH • DIVERSE MUSIC NEWPORT • DRIFT TOTNES • EARWORM YORK • ELEPHANT WINCHESTER • EMPIRE ST ALBANS • FIVES LEIGH ON SEA • FOREVER RECORDS NOTTINGHAM • FREEBIRD DUBLIN • FRIENDLY BRISTOL • GATEFIELD SOUNDS WHITSTABLE • HONEST JONS LONDON • HOT SALVATION FOLKESTONE • JAM FALMOUTH • JUMBO LEEDS • LEFT FOR DEAD SHREW

FEVER RAY
PLUNGE
Rabid Records

FIELD MUSIC
OPEN HERE
Memphis Industries

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN
HOW TO SOLVE OUR HUMAN PROBLEMS
Matador Records

JOAN AS POLICE WOMAN
DAMNED DEVOTION
Play It Again Sam

HOOKWORMS
MICROSHIFT
Domino Records

EZRA FURMAN
TRANSANGELIC EXODUS
Bella Union

SUN KIL MOON
GHOSTS OF THE GREAT HIGHWAY
Rough Trade Records

FRANZ FERDINAND
ALWAYS ASCENDING
Domino Records

CAR SEAT HEADREST
TWIN FANTASY
Matador Records

POLICA AND STARGAZE
MUSIC FOR THE LONG EMERGENCY
Transgressive

ANNA BURCH
QUIT THE CURSE
Heavenly

THE ORIELLES
SILVER DOLLAR MOMENT
Heavenly

T A L K I N G

THREADS

For tenth studio album *The Thread That Keeps Us*, Arizona band Calexico retreated to a rustic home studio on the Californian coast. **Laura Barton** meets vocalist Joey Burns and drummer John Convertino to find out how the pair's enduring love of vinyl informed the record…

About 20 miles or so north of San Francisco, on the edge of Marin County, lies a small recording studio named Panoramic House. "It's tucked away near the Muir Woods National Park," says Joey Burns, Calexico's frontman and multi-instrumentalist, who recorded there last year. "You could walk out the door to a trail that took you through a miniature rainforest and dumped you right out there on Highway 1. And right there, next to that, is Stinson Beach. And rising above all this is Mount Tamalpais, which was deemed sacred land by the native indigenous tribe. It's a gorgeous stretch of land and I'd never been there, and it's beautiful."

For Burns, recording *The Thread That Keeps Us*, Calexico's exquisite 10th studio record (including 2001 concert gift *Aerocalexico*), there felt like a return of sorts. Raised in Southern California, but now a long-term resident of Tucson, Arizona, he'd often thought back to the formative time spent in Northern California: visiting his older brother at college in Berkeley, trawling the music shops for records and magazines.

"I really felt the connection with my Californian youth," he says, "and I was reminded of some of the nightmares and some of the joys and some of the dreams that unfolded for me growing up in California. There was nature, there was love, but there was also conformity and how you fit in with different groups – the surfers, the punks, the stoners, the jocks… and how painful that was.

"So the return to California was a return to look at that," he continues. "And to look at the home of American counterculture in Berkeley and San Francisco." He reels off a list, from City Lights bookstore to the environmentalist John Muir, after whom the woods surrounding Panoramic House are named. "I thought about all these people and how they must have intersected here at one point or another, and how all these themes that are weighing us down today were very much part of my childhood. So I saw a story unfolding."

The story that runs through *The Thread That Keeps Us* is a sweet and simple one. "I imagined two kids fall in love, coming from two different kinds of backgrounds and there's a lot of unknown inbetweens," he explains. "And at the same time, there's an antagonist, this larger-than-life character. And that could be any nightmarish figure, it could be Donald Trump, or I almost imagined it as an oil executive trying to put oil rigs off the coastline, and there's an oil spill. So the kids seek refuge in the Muir Woods, and there they find their spirit guide, the girl in the forest. And they try to get their friends to come together to overcome the powers that be who are trying to poison and pollute the landscape and ruin the town."

> "HOW DOES SEEING A WHALE INFLUENCE YOUR MUSIC? WELL, IT MAKES YOUR DAY"

He was inspired, he says, by his twin six-year-old daughters, Twyla and Genevieve, "By their love of stories and their love for nature", he laughs. "The first time we went camping, they said: 'Dad, can we live here?'"

Landscape, he suspects, can bleed into song. "I'm sure there's something to do with physics and temperature and humidity," he says. "Being right on the coast, there's a lot of things in the air. John would go running every morning, through the trail, through the rainforest and down to the coast. He would be gone for two hours, and he even saw a whale one day. And how does seeing a whale influence your music? Well, it makes your day."

STRATAS OF ROCK

There is a line you can draw between surf rock and desert rock, Burns says, attributable perhaps to the fact that the desert was once the ocean floor. "There's a style of 50s rock and pop that has a surf beat, but then if you put acoustic guitars on and add trumpet, it turns into something different, where it's got one foot in Johnny Cash's *Ring Of Fire* and another in Link Wray's *Rumble*, and Dick Dale, and The Beach Boys, and The Ventures."

He recalls how, a few years ago, Calexico provided the rhythm section for a "kind of Mexican surf-rock" record put together by Camilo Lara of the Mexican Institute Of Sound, which paid tribute to the songs of José Alfredo Jiménez – one of Mexico's most noted singer-songwriters of traditional rancheras. "I love Camilo," Burns says. "He's just always got some interesting project going on. He's someone I look up to a lot."

The breadth of Burns' musical taste and, correspondingly, his record collection, is quite astonishing. The seeds were sown early by his parents, who would travel for ▶

Calexico drummer John Convertino (left) and vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Joey Burns

his father's work "to Mexico, to Acapulco, to Trinidad, to New Orleans," he recalls, "and they'd come back with music, with records or mostly they'd come back with a songbook. So my mom would play [popular Mexican song] *Cielito Lindo*, or Scott Joplin's ragtime, as well as songs from *Chorus Line* and *West Side Story* on the piano."

He still envies his mother's record collection. "My mom had a book, like a scrapbook, and instead of pages, it had blank sleeves where you could place 45s. And she had some cool 45s in there – my favourite one would be the Everly Brothers' *Wake Up Little Susie* and *All I Have To Do Is Dream*. There's hope in those harmonies."

His aunt, too, exerted a special musical influence – donating her record collection to Burns. "She mostly has a lot of classical, a lot of Broadway, some pop, a couple of rock records. She has The Kinks, and she's also got a really beautiful Françoise Hardy record, *The "Yeh-Yeh" Girl From Paris!*"

It was perhaps inevitable, then, that Burns would become a musician. He picked up his brother's guitar early, joined the high-school jazz band and played in a symphony orchestra while working towards a degree in performance on the double bass. "All the while I really wanted to go to UCLA and study world music," he says. "That would have been really exciting."

For all that he loves live performance, Burns has a deep reverence for recorded music. "I worked in a record store in California, and I loved the bootlegs," he remembers. "The bootleg is a really beautiful thing. Fans get a closer look. We would make vinyl copies, shrinkwrap them and sell them." His favourite bootlegs include Bob Dylan's *Zimmerman Ten Of Swords* and a version of Brian Wilson singing *God Only Knows* a cappella. "It's divine," he says. "It transports you somewhere else."

One that lingers from his record store days is a bootleg of The Police at Hatfield Polytechnic. "I love to play it for my kids," he says, then quotes from the record's onstage patter, does his best English accent, and laughs. "No, I've never been to Hatfield."

MINOR MIRACLE

One of Burns' greatest musical discoveries has been the Portuguese Fado singer Amália Rodrigues. "It's such a random way that I discovered her music," he says. "I was walking through downtown Tucson past a used furniture store that's no longer there, with some friends from LA, and I heard this music and I said: 'Wow what is this?', and my friend said, 'Oh, that's Amália Rodrigues!'". Back in LA, the friend sent Burns one of Rodrigues' albums: "And then I wound up going to Portugal to find out more about her."

Rodrigues died in 1999. "So, unfortunately, there was no chance of hearing her perform live," he says. "But I did get to the part of Lisbon where she would perform, the Bairro Alto – and so that was a really important moment for me. I liked the way she embellished a melody or improvised a theme, but she was doing it under the umbrella of a tradition. The songs have a rolling feeling because of the Portuguese guitar – it's almost like a Cuban tres, but it's not as percussive as Cuban music."

Burns bought quite a lot of Rodrigues' recordings on vinyl. "I love her voice and I love that connection to the minor blues," he says. "When you hear a lot of

"MY MOM HAD A BOOK, LIKE A SCRAPBOOK. INSTEAD OF PAGES, IT HAD BLANK SLEEVES WHERE YOU PLACED 45S"

HOW TO BUY CALEXICO

Three must-have LPs from the Calexico vaults…

THE BLACK LIGHT
1998, Quarterstick

Building on debut *Spoke*, Calexico's second album is a must-listen for those wanting to explore the band's deep and rewarding catalogue. From the opening tremolo-heavy Spaghetti Western instrumental *Gypsy's Curse*, it's a vivid transportation into lonely desert territory and wistful border songs. Decent copies are usually available on Discogs for not much more than a tenner, too.

FEAST OF WIRE
2003, Quarterstick

An exploratory yet refined listen, brimming with masterly songcraft, Calexico's fourth studio release yielded perhaps their first inroads into the mainstream. An affecting brew of Portuguese guitar, stirring strings, jazzy forays and a largely instrumental second side didn't prevent *Feast Of Wire* from being the band's most consistent listen to date.

CARRIED TO DUST
2008, Quarterstick

Returning to the brilliance of *Feast Of Wire*, this is many fans' favourite. Vocal cameos from Jairo Zavala of Spanish band Depedro and Iron & Wine's Sam Beam add to mariachi brass and Convertino's intricate brilliance behind the kit. The Latin shuffle and Chinese influence of *Two Silver Trees* makes for a career highlight. If you're going to start with one single Calexico record, make it this one.

Burns and Convertino onstage at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in 2015

Getty

Latin music, you hear a lot of songs that are in minor. Then you hear music from North America and for the most part, everything's in a major mode. But for some reason or another, I really gravitate towards music in a minor mode. And there is a thread. That blue vein. And I've been picking up and finding traces of it, whether it be in surf music or Ennio Morricone's Western soundtracks or Afro-Cuban folk or jazz music… That's one of the things with music. It's all connected. So when we're in this era of extremes or attention-grabbing sensationalist bullshit, it's like: 'Come on people, get over yourselves, sit down and talk it out. Because we really are more closely connected than not."

A PIANO AND A JAZZ HAUL

"Excuse the dogs barking," says John Convertino, Calexico's drummer. "I'm going outside right now into my garage. I work on my car here, it's a 1958 Volkswagen Karmann Ghia, but out here in the garage I also have stacks of records…" There's the sound of doors opening, a flicker of record sleeves. "Actually, before I called you, I was listening to some of my favourites," he continues from inside the garage. "And one of my favourites is Béla Bartók's *Piano Music*…"

He pauses while he looks at the sleeve – a tattered three-record collection he found going through the bins at a thrift store. "This is an original-issue vinyl record from the 50s, might be a little bit older," he says. "He's like super-experimental, there's some pieces that he wrote for children on here, and it's just an awesome record."

Convertino's second record is more recent, sent to him by his friend Jeremy Barnes, from A Hawk And A Hacksaw. "So Jeremy started his own label, it's called LM Duplication and it's just really great stuff on that label – interesting music from the East, Eastern Europe, really great traditional music he's recorded with musicians from Turkey and Slovenia and Slovakia," he explains. The record in his hands, though, is A Hawk And A Hacksaw's own 2013 release, *You Have Already Gone To The Other World* – a concept album written as a retrospective soundtrack to the 1965 movie *Shadows Of Forgotten Ancestors* by Sergei Parajanov.

"It's just beautiful," says Convertino. "It's solo piano music that Heather [Trost] plays, and there's accordion and amazing percussion and it's very Eastern European." He pauses. "It's interesting that Bartók is Hungarian, and I've chosen these two records. It's something I didn't even think of until right this second!"

A few years ago, Convertino expanded his record collection by chance, with two crates of records from a furniture mover. He moved a piano I bought here in El Paso and he showed up to move it by himself," he says with a laugh. "So I wound up helping him and I think he felt a little guilty. And he noticed that I had a record player and some records, so he said: 'Hey, I moved a house the other day and they left these records they said they didn't want… would you be interested in them?'. I said: 'Yeah', just thinking, 'who knows, there could be something interesting in them.'"

The following day, the furniture mover arrived at Convertino's house with two large crates. "And I'm going through them and there's Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane…" He still sounds faintly awed. "All original releases! And they're in perfect shape!" One of his favourites from the haul is Thelonious Monk's 1963 release *Criss-Cross*.

"The cover is super-cool and it has some of his classics on it. I'm so happy I have this record."

There was a name written on some of the records in the crate, and Convertino, keen to know who had owned the collection, typed it into Google. "It turned out he was a World War Two veteran and after the war, he settled here in El Paso," he says. "He was evidently quite a sophisticated music fan. He had a lot of great jazz, samba and bossa nova, but he also had a lot of cool classical stuff." There were a few oddities in there, too. "A lot of men in those days collected those records for moods – *Music For A Romantic Mood* or whatever," he laughs. "Some of the music's pretty cheesy, but if anything, they're just cool because the covers are so great. And you never know when you might need them."

Recently, Convertino has been getting into The Smiths. "My son was really curious about Morrissey because I read the autobiography, and my son is a reader, too, and so he said: 'Who is this guy? What's he all about?'" he explains. "And so I said: 'Well, let's check it out'. So we went on YouTube and we watched some Smiths videos and he really liked them."

His son is 12 now, his musical adventures just beginning, and Convertino is enjoying following them along. "It's interesting, it contrasts my own boyhood and his boyhood," he notes. "You can imagine when I went to the store and bought records, it was quite a different experience from him surfing YouTube with me, watching Morrissey. There are so many more options now."

Convertino found most of his records via his older siblings – three older sisters and an older brother. "I just remember being in the fourth grade and coming home from school and putting the headphones on and listening to *Harvest* and David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust…*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar,*" he recalls. "I'd listen to all three of those records. I probably did that for half a year, every day after school, it was my little escape zone."

He bought his first record three years later. Convertino's brother had a friend who loved Yes and who loaned him their 1969 self-titled debut and 1971's *Fragile*. Intrigued, Convertino took himself to the record store to find more. "And I looked in the bin with all the Yes records and I bought the live one, *Yessongs*." It surprised him how different the live songs were to the studio versions. "Then I found out it was a different drummer," he says. "I liked the studio version better, which was Bill Bruford."

SIGNATURE SOUND

Convertino's voice takes on a special quality when he talks about drummers and drumming. He recalls a particularly enjoyable moment in the studio when he found an unexpected rhythm for the track *Voices In The Field*. "Joey wrote that in 6/8, which is real common for us," he says. "It has a 123-123 feel that's in a lot of our songs. But I kind of surprised him with this beat that's half 3/4, and half sub-divided, so the first half is 'um-cha-cha', and the second half is like 'um-cha-um-cha-um-cha-cha'." He pauses. "I don't know how you're going to transcribe that," he says, and laughs.

Convertino first heard that rhythm on a Bob Dylan song. "I don't remember which record, but I do remember looking and seeing the drummer was Kenny Buttrey, and he played drums on one of my favourite records – Neil Young's *Harvest*. Super-simple drumming, very clean and very soulful. I didn't know he'd ever drummed with Dylan."

The Calexico recording process is often marked by moments of surprise. "Joey and I really don't talk about the record beforehand," Convertino explains. "I just show up. This time, I was really surprised at how complete some of the songs were – almost every record we've done, Joey's just had real basic ideas, or a few chords and we just start working from there. But on this record, he had quite a few songs completed."

His voice smiles down the line. "And that made it real easy for me," he says. "I could just go swimming with the whales." ●

"JOEY AND I REALLY DON'T TALK ABOUT THE RECORD BEFOREHAND," CONVERTINO EXPLAINS. "I JUST SHOW UP"

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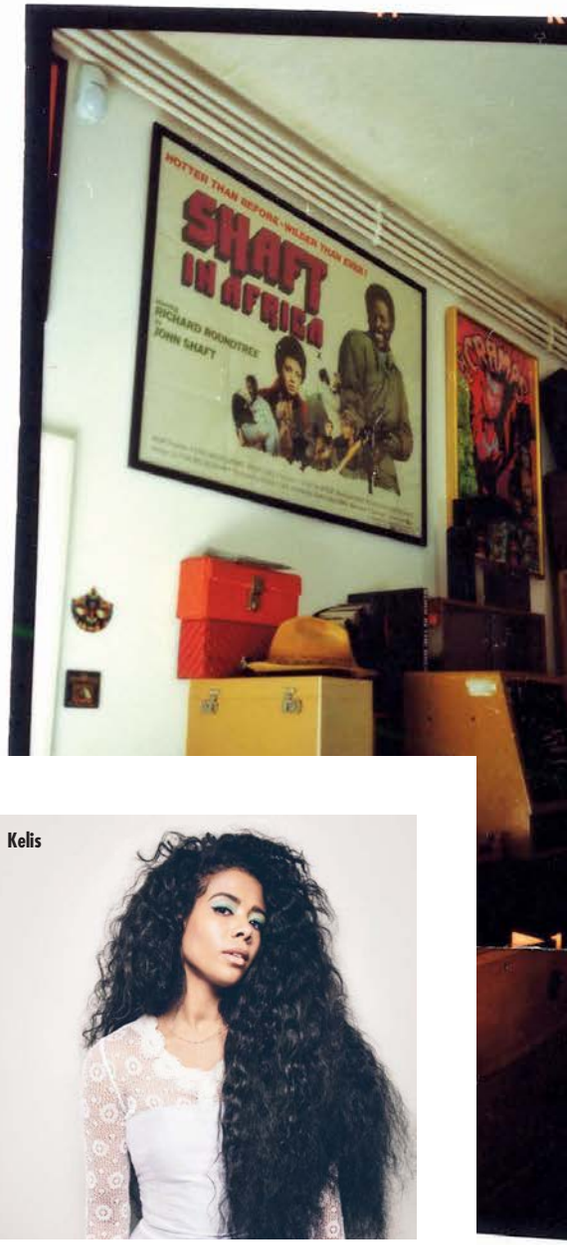
OBSESSED WITH HIGH RESOLUTION

NINJA WARRIORS

Ninja Tune is an iconic London-born indie label, launched in 1990 by the DJ duo Jonathan More and Matt Black, aka Coldcut. **Murray Stassen** discovers how the pair went from selling white-label records out of the back of a van to founding what would become one of the world's most respected labels…

Roots Manuva



The left side of Ninja Tune co-founder Jonathan More's office-cum-studio is lined with shelves, stacked with hundreds, if not thousands, of records. The other three walls are covered in various pieces of art and memorabilia from a career in music spanning 30 years. Under the record shelves to the left of the room is a stand, with two turntables – mission control. His desk occupies the space at the back of the room under the window, where he's sat when *Long Live Vinyl* walks in.

"I loved records from a pretty young age," More tells us, after we've taken a seat in the armchair to the right of the door, in awe of his extensive music collection. "My dad went to Russia and he came back with a 7" record of Yuri Gagarin in space, which I still have. I was about 11. So I collected records from that point onwards, really. I used to save up my money. I lived in this village called Thame and by the time I was 15 or 16, I used to go to Oxford. There were some great record shops there. I used to buy records and go to see gigs."

Ninja Tune's South London headquarters are an unmarked, unassuming building on a quiet road not far from Elephant And Castle. Step through the nondescript doors, however, and you're transported into the engine room of the company's global operations.

Ninja Tune and its imprints, such as hip-hop label Big Dada (founded by journalist Will Ashon in 1997), "pop and rock" label Counter and Flying Lotus-run experimental label Brainfeeder have released music by Roots Manuva, Kate Tempest, Bonobo, Wiley, Diplo, Young Fathers, Run The Jewels and Thundercat, among others.

More is, of course, one of the British label's co-founders, as well as one half of the legendary electronic production duo Coldcut, who celebrated their 30th anniversary in 2017. Ninja Tune's other half is More's business partner Matt Black – the pair met through a love of rare-groove records and

Kelis

Matt Black and Jonathan More, pictured in 2016

Thundercat

Bonobo

hip-hop over 30 years ago and, together with MD Peter Quicke, who last year celebrated his 25th year at the label, have carved out one of the all-time indie-label success stories.

BLACK CATALOGUE

"I went to art college and got into DJing at the college parties," explains More, recalling his progression from record collector to superstar DJ and label boss. "Fairly quickly, people started to ask me to DJ at their parties, and soon I was DJing more parties than I was doing work at college. I thought: 'Hang on a minute, I need to start charging some money.' I did, and people kept asking me."

More says that when he wasn't working as a part-time art teacher, he was working two days a week at London's Reckless Records.

"I was generally just trying to survive on my wits," he says. "I was running clubs, too. I hosted the *Meltdown* show [on Kiss FM] and was DJing all over the place. I ran a club in New Cross called The Flim Flam club with two other guys, which got really popular.

"I wanted to make records for a long time, but hadn't found anybody who was willing to come to work with me. I'd actually been in a band, sort of, with mates of mine from my college. We did put one track out on a Cherry Red compilation."

Enter the other half of Coldcut, Matt Black, a computer programmer and hip-hop fan who was born in London, but grew up in the English countryside. "I went to university at Oxford and hung about with a bunch of other guys getting high and getting into music," he tells us. "We all moved up to London and were still living together and were really into music and getting into hip-hop. This was the early 80s, and there were great records around, like *Planet Rock* (by Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force) and *The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel*, which was something that really inspired us."

London in the mid 80s "was a unique time," says Black. "There were a lot of second-generation families, immigrant families, whether they were Jamaican or African, or from all over the world. London was a mash-up of a lot of different youths from different cultures. But we all liked music, getting high and getting to know each other. There were some really cool parties.

"The mainstream didn't really cater for that. Jon was thrown off the decks in a West End club for playing a Fela Kuti record: they didn't sell many cocktails that way. So we started doing our own thing in rejection of the narrow-mindedness of the establishment.

"We started to try to make mixtapes and realised that to do it properly, you needed some Technics turntables and a proper crossfade mixer. I was the one out of the posse that kind of took it to a more serious level, but it was very much a crew thing."

More recalls that Black went into the Berwick Street record shop where he was working one day "looking for some breakbeats and hip-hop sources", as well as a bootlegged copy of *Cross The Track (We Better Go Back)*, a James Brown production

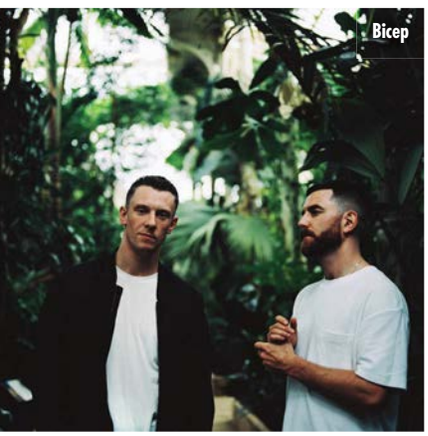
performed by Maceo And The Macks. "At the time, I think it was only me and Norman Jay and some other DJs that had it," remembers More. "And mysteriously, it was bootlegged and came out on a 12". It's past history now, but we used to sell them under the counter."

SPECIAL STUFF

"They weren't out on the shelves, but there was a range of 'specialist material' available," he continues. "I sold Matt a copy of this tune and we got chatting and he said he was making a mix, and I was like: 'Cool, let's listen to it'." The next day, Black went back to More with "pretty much the bones" of what would become Coldcut's first record, which More proceeded to play in the shop.

"In those days, the shops, Groove Records and all the other ones, were like the chatrooms of the day," says More. "They were

Pictures: Olivia Malone, B+, Martin Holtkamp, Matt Jura, Ben Price, Shane McCauley, Phil Sharp, Cooper Mitchell, Shaun Bloodworth, Tim Brinkhurst, India Cranks, Spencer Murphy, Eva Vermandel, Matt McGinley, Alice Rains, Emma Gutteridge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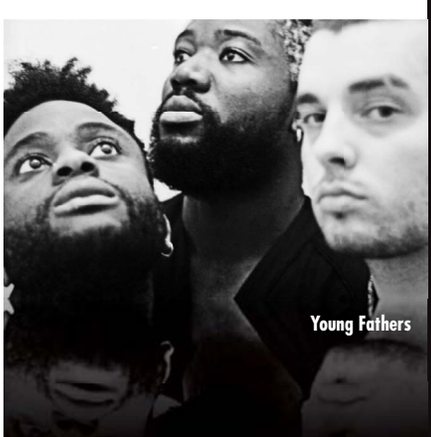
Young Fathers

WORLD RECORDS

The pair reveal some of their favourite record-buying spots around the globe…

"I recently found this place in Johannesburg, South Africa, called Collectors Treasury," says Jon. "It's a serious place in as much as you've got a lot of work to do. It's like six floors of junk, books and general stuff. Nothing is priced. Two guys run it. They were typically cranky record-store owners. It just goes on and on. I enjoyed that. It's hard work, you get filthy and it's dusty. I didn't have a record player with me and really, you need a player and plenty of water.

"We also went to Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean. It's a French colony, so [they use] Euros and they've done very well out of the EU. They've got infrastructure in place. The French are very into their music and a vast range. So Réunion is a fascinating mix of Creole, of African, Madagascan, Indian… I went to a boot fair and did a bit of digging – that was good."

Rare cuts

Jon recalls pressing Coldcut's first record, *Say Kids What Time Is It?* and how valuable the original pressing quickly became… "We didn't license anything on *Say Kids*… We pressed 500 and that was it. We could have actually made a shitload more money out of it if we'd been more [savvy]. We just moved on to the next thing, but they got bootlegged fairly quickly. They were pressing copies and it was changing hands for stupid money in Japan and all the rest of it. So we didn't clear any samples on that one. It was for promotional use only and even when we pressed it, we sat down with the 500 copies, which were all white labels, but there was a matrix number on the runout groove from the record plant. So I sat down with the soldering iron and soldered all of those out. You can tell the originals, because they are a lot heavier vinyl. They've had the matrix number soldered out and they are rubber stamped with *Say Kids*…. We used to have a box of 10, but they got stolen. I have one, but I'm just not sure where it is. Makes me think I want to get that back. Rescue it."

London calling

Matt Black explains how Ninja Tune emerged from the DIY, underground dance-music culture they were a part of in London in the 80s.

"I love London, and Ninja Tune and Coldcut are very much London phenomena. If you look at most cultural phenomena, whether it's Pink Floyd in the psychedelic scene, or punk, or sound-system culture, they all started very underground. The mainstream wasn't interested and actively rejected it. So we were like: 'Fuck you, we know what we're doing, we're having a great time. Let's do this ourselves'. So that was an important birthing ground for what Coldcut grew out from. And really, I would say today's modern electronic-music scene largely grew out of that scene, with all respect to other cities like Manchester and Bristol. Bristol is a city that has always had a very strong music and art and resistance identity, as well as other places around the world."

Ninja Tune MD Peter Quicke, Matt Black and Jon More

Kate Tempest

Wiley

Flying Lotus

the place where people went, so it was a good way of testing records out. I saw some ears prick up in the shop. I was really impressed. So I said: 'Let's do something."'

Black and More put the finishing touches to that first record, *Say Kids What Time Is It?*. It was made entirely of samples, using pieces of music from sources as diverse as *The Jungle Book* and James Brown's *Funky Drummer*, with the intro and name borrowed from the theme song of *Howdy Doody*, a US kids' show. They pressed the record and put it out as a white label, pretending it was somebody called DJ Coldcut and that it wasn't them. "I said that I got them in America and wouldn't give them to anybody," laughs More. "We sold them for 15 quid a pop. So in 1987, that was quite a lot of money, but we sold 500 out the back of a van. The only person I gave one to was Jay Strongman, who was DJing at the Mud Club at that point. When we made records, we would take them down to Jay and he would play them in the club and we could see what would happen."

Say Kids… was released as a white label, "basically because it was so illegal", due to its unlicensed samples, explains More. Black and More then set up a label called Ahead Of Our Time, to release another sample-based record called *Beats + Pieces*, officially as a DJ duo under the name of Coldcut this time. "*Beats + Pieces* was kind of illegal as well, but we chopped up the shit a lot more," he continues. Ahead Of Our Time was not only a "statement of intent," says More, but also a "nice long name" for a record label.

"We could see if we were in any of the charts, because it's a lot longer than lots of others. It was sort of a joke, but it was also like marking our territory. Then we were asked to do the [7 Minutes Of Madness] remix of *Paid In Full* by Eric B. & Rakim and everything went mad from that point," remembers More. The duo started working with legendary artist manager, (the late) Jazz Summers' label Big Life Records and got signed to Tommy Boy in America. "We made *Doctorin' The House* and we were on *Top Of The Pops*," More adds.

TOUR, LIKE SUSHI

The pair eventually became disillusioned with the experience of working with bigger music companies and found there were certain established industry practices that they didn't agree with. By 1990, keen to regain their creative control, they came up with the idea for Ninja Tune while on tour in Japan. "It's a typical record industry thing. While we were making hits they were more than happy to have faith," explains More. "But when we started getting a bit weird, they didn't really understand. It's the normal course, really.

"WE DID THE REMIX OF *PAID IN FULL* BY ERIC B. & RAKIM AND EVERYTHING WENT MAD"

The Herbaliser

Run The Jewels

DJ Vadim

EERA

The Cinematic Orchestra

Kid Koala

Ninja Tune's 10th Anniversary

"It came time to make a record and on the second record, we just spent a lot of time arguing with them. We didn't get them, you know? We didn't like the way they did business. We audited them and found out they owed us a shitload of money."

In 1990, Coldcut were in Japan on tour with Beats International – (Norman Cook, later as known Fatboy Slim, and Lindy Layton) and did a 15-gig tour of what were "effectively superstores". "It was great to get out of the country and get away from the record company and eat a lot of fish," says More. "We watched crazy Japanese TV in the middle of the night when we couldn't sleep from the jetlag and invented shit. So it sort of reinvigorated us. We came up with our whole idea for Ninja Tune."

When they got back to London, they made Ninja Tune's first release, *Zen Brakes Vol. 1*, released in 1990 under the name of Bogus Order, because they were still under contract as Coldcut. It wasn't until 1997 that an actual Coldcut record (*Let Us Play!*) would be released via Ninja Tune, and it featured guest appearances by Grandmaster Flash, Jello Biafra and others. Black explains that the experience they had with the music business with the likes of Big Life made him feel as if they "were a product of a big hamburger machine".

"To get out of that, we had to return to being a cottage industry, which we ran ourselves," he says. "Having been rather ripped off by the company we were contracted to, we thought, 'this is not fair'. There must be a better way to make it work."

GRAVY TRAIN

Jon More and Matt Black's experience in the music business as artists first has informed the way they've run Ninja Tune as an anti-corporate, artist-friendly music company, with as much of a focus on a strong visual and social identity as great music. "We do a 50/50 deal on the record company, which is considered to be a sort of standard indie deal," says More. "It's a comprehensibly sensible thing to do. Once you've sold a certain amount and once you recoup the money you spent on making the product, then everything after that is gravy. If you can start hitting a sweet spot then you earn phenomenally more than what you would earn on a major label."

Black concludes that, in spite of their highly successful career over the last 30 years, he's still not very interested in money and suggests that it is just "an energy that [allows you] to do more art".

"I think that many artists are probably like that, which is why many artists struggle to make a living and a business out of it," he says. "But, we were also Thatcher's children. As much as we hated her, perhaps there was a thread to that culture that made legible the idea that it's okay to have a good business, but don't run it like a Nazi. Run it like a hippie, but a successful hippie." ●

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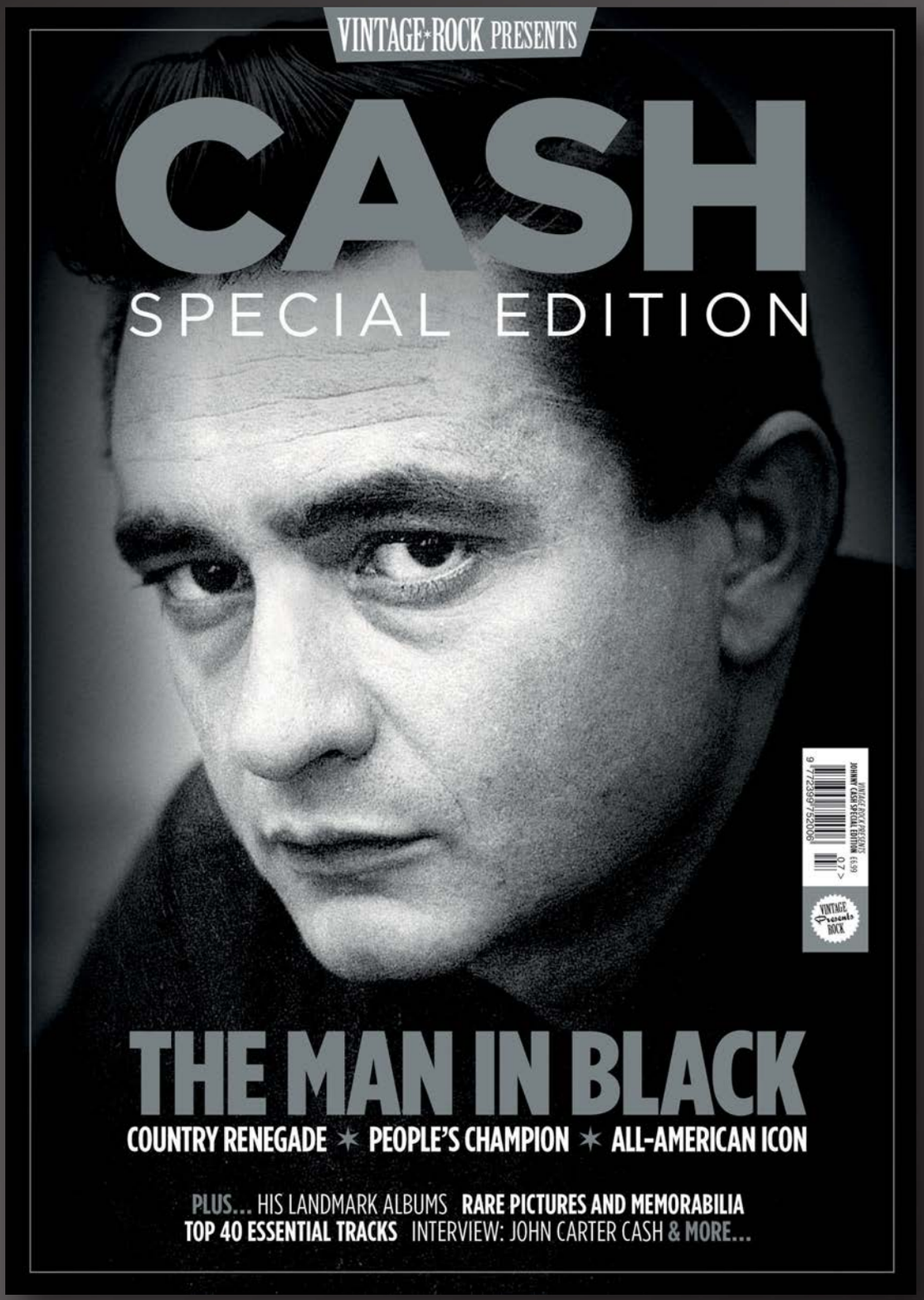

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FROM THE MAKERS OF CLASSIC POP · The Guitar Magazine · MusicTech · VINTAGE ROCK · COUNTRY MUSIC

Here comes the SUN

Charly Records have embarked on a huge reissue programme of Johnny Cash's Sun Records albums, remastered from the original tapes. **Rik Flynn** meets label manager Rob Caiger and engineer Barry Grint at Alchemy Mastering to discuss the finer details…

One might be forgiven for reserving a touch of skepticism when presented with yet more Johnny Cash reissues. Not only is it now more than 60 years since Cash first rocked up at Sun Records' Memphis studio, but even a brief search throws up a mountainous stack of vinyl editions to get your ears around. Take a look at Charly Records' first-of-a-kind series, however, and those fears will swiftly be put to rest.

Not only did Charly recently celebrate its 40th year in business, but it's one of the most highly respected labels in its field, with a scrupulous approach to reissuing the greats – and an impressive catalogue of over 200,000 masters. Whether it's Chicago soul greats at Curtom Records, sweet 60s sounds from Immediate, the Brill Building's superlative outlet Red Bird or – as is the case here – the mighty rock 'n' roll Mecca, Sun, Charly host the finest reincarnations from these time-honoured houses – and they've outdone themselves with this current Cash refresh.

From first reveal of the meticulously reproduced physical product to that needle-on-wax moment, it's clear that the team behind the magic here know their onions. It's a series that's destined to enthral any recent arrivals to Cash's oaky tones and add extra sonic dimensions for the die-hards, while giving audiophiles a timely fix. The pacemakers arrived in the form of new compilation, *Greatest Hits: The Sun Records Years* – issued to mark Cash's 60th Anniversary at the label, and a limited reissue of country chart-topper *I Walk The Line* – housed in facsimile Sun house-bag. Our appetites were duly whetted…

BIG-TIME CHARLY

While this latest push to breathe new life into Cash's early work has been a long time coming, Charly have enjoyed a solid relationship with Sun for some time.

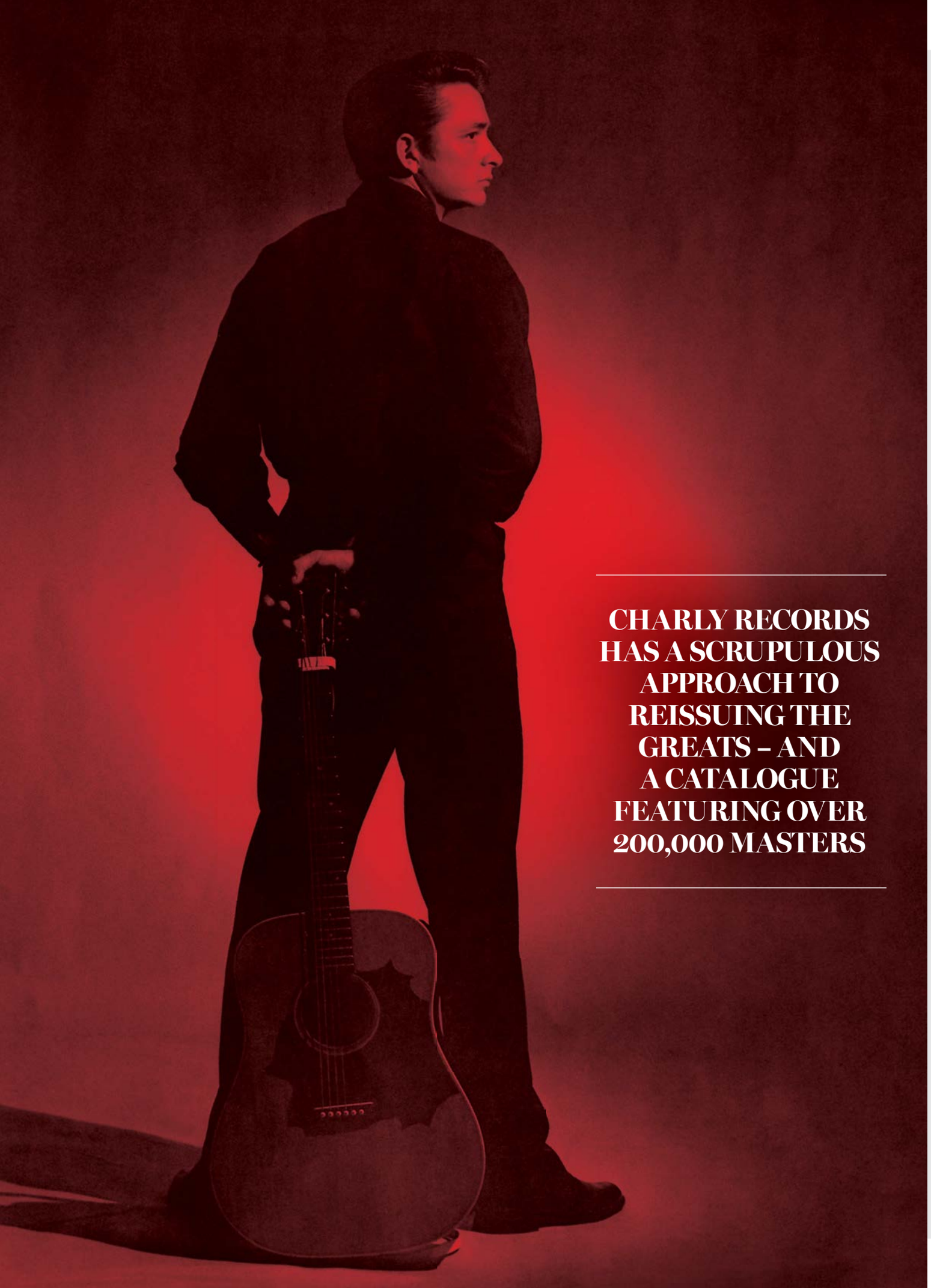
"We've represented Sun outside of the US for over 40 years," explains label manager Rob Caiger. "When Shelby and John Singleton first purchased the catalogue from Sam Phillips, they were looking for partners and they loved the independent vibe of Charly. Way back in the early 70s (Charly founder) Jean-Luc Young went over and did one-to-one transfers of all the original Sun tapes, all the session reels – everything. I still can't get my head around how much we've got – it's wonderful."

So why choose now to return to Cash's early work? "It was long overdue to introduce his Sun catalogue to the world again," Rob continues. "Obviously, Johnny Cash has been reissued across all of the various labels he's been on – and on Charly, but not to this extent and not to this level. We're releasing all seven of the original Sun albums, two a month. The first 1,000 of each will be on coloured vinyl, taking an element from the original sleeve, so for *Hot And Blue Guitar…* you can guess what colour that's gonna be…"

Beyond the hype, there's clearly plenty to separate these reissues from what's come before. "First of all, we have access to the original master tapes," explains Rob. "In the UK and Europe, much of Cash's material falls into the public domain, and there are a lot of companies out there exploiting that, but they have to copy from an LP that was released at the time. They can't have access to the tapes or the original artwork."

The process – from restoration of the masters to the end product – was always going to be an arduous, yet rewarding process. "We couldn't cut pure analogue, sadly, because of the condition of some of the tapes," says Rob. "So I decided we needed new transfers done and there was a little bit of restoration needed. So high-res transfers – 96k/24-bit – were done over at Sun. Then we worked with the files, with Nick Robbins at Sound Mastering, to get a really nice cutting master for the guys at Alchemy to work with – sometimes the tapes are pristine, but in a lot of cases, you're battling age."

With restoration complete, the vital decision was made to go for half-speed masters. "There's a reason why Cash is



CHARLY RECORDS HAS A SCRUPULOUS APPROACH TO REISSUING THE GREATS – AND A CATALOGUE FEATURING OVER 200,000 MASTERS

THE CUTTING CREW

Q&A NICK ROBBINS, SOUND MASTERING LTD

Q Have you ever worked on tapes of a similar age before and, if so, was the process the same?
"Yes, and older, and the process is almost always the same – checking the playback EQ is correct and that the azimuth is as accurate as it can be."

Q What were the varying conditions of the tapes when you received them, and what are the main problems involved with restorations of this kind?
"In this case, the tapes had been laid off by Sun in America and I was given high-resolution digital files to work from."

Q Once you'd worked out a specific restoration process for one of the tapes, were you able to apply the same process to each tape?
"The restoration required was reasonably similar across all the albums, as the tapes were in good condition and sounded quite close to the original LPs."

Q What's the process for tape restoration in these kinds of cases?
"These recordings were made in mono, but are often laid off on stereo machines, so the first thing to do is decide which side sounds best. Once the source is in true mono, then equalisation is applied to compensate for any loss of brightness that might be caused by age and condition.

"Also, it's necessary to adjust the sound of some songs that are over-bright or too dull, compared to each other, on the original recordings. Many of the songs on these albums were not from the same original sessions, so there was quite a variation in tonal balance. Due in part to this process, but also to other factors, some of the songs needed some gentle de-hissing to remove excess tape noise. Plus, I was also able to remove some mic pops and other inadvertent noises that had crept onto the original recordings/tapes without intent. Once I was happy with the overall sound, then I was able to reference the original vinyl LPs for the gaps between the songs and deliver them to the cutting room as whole sides ready to cut."

Q Were there any spine-chilling moments?
"Well, *I Walk The Line* is pretty special, but there are many great tracks on these albums, so motivation wasn't a problem!"

Q Any favourite moments from the whole process?
"Getting the final product in my hand is always the best bit… and very nice it is, too."

Q How long did the whole process take you?
"Probably about seven days in total."

Q Do you undertake the process with vinyl specifically in mind, or does it not make a difference?
"Not in this case, but sometimes, if the music has very high levels of very low bass or extremely wide stereo, then you have to be aware of what difficulties this might cause for the vinyl-cutting engineer."

Q Do you have any part to play once the tapes go to Barry at Alchemy Mastering?
"No, he knows what he's up to and if I've done my job, then there shouldn't be any problems."

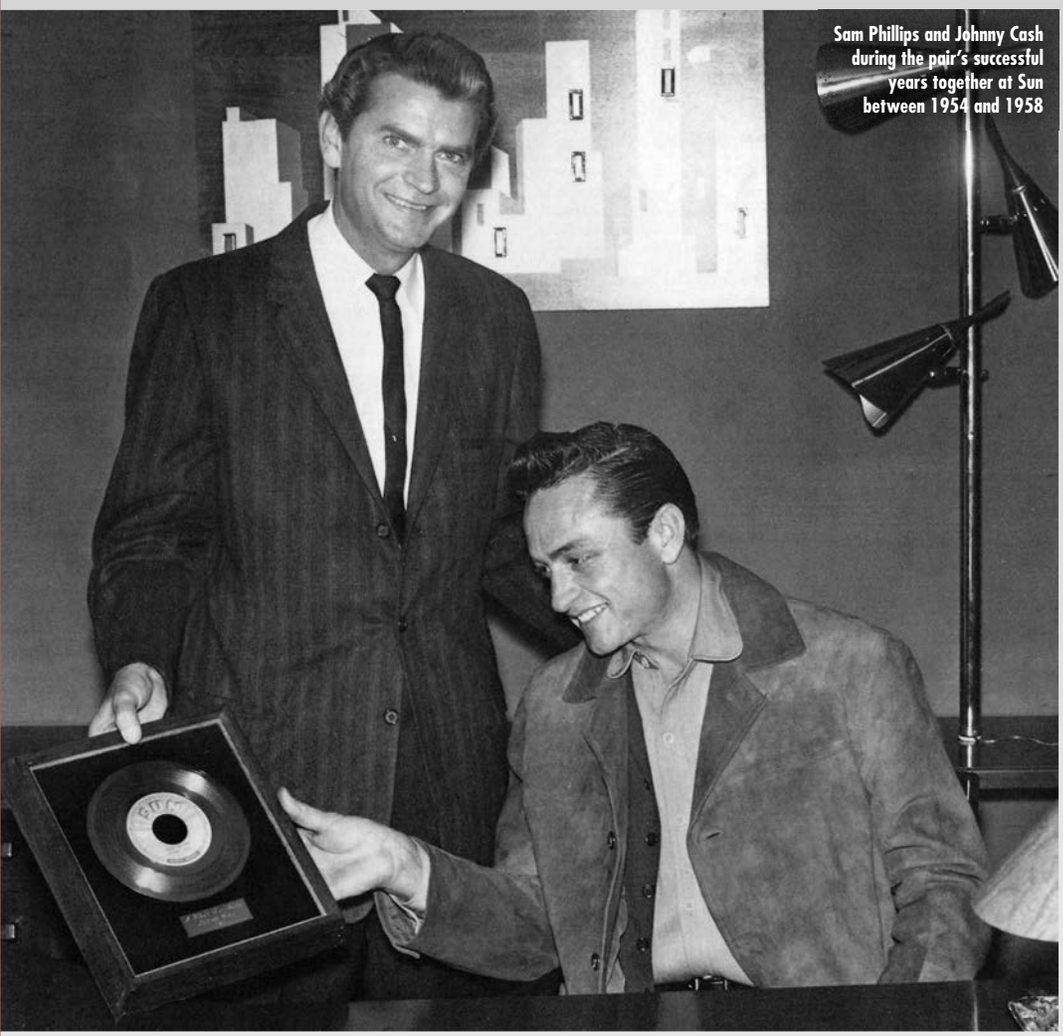
Q Do you work alone?
"Yes, but there's quite a bit of consultation with Rob Caiger in the initial stages and he always checks everything before it's put into production – and sometimes spots things I haven't noticed."

unique," adds Rob. "We had to bring our game up to match him, even though he recorded this stuff 60 or more years ago. So Barry made the decision to try half speed, and what a difference it made…"

Barry continues: "In a nutshell, because everything is happening at half speed, the amps have got more time to deliver what's being asked of them, it gives them more capacity, so they can work at 56% and still have plenty of room if something's suddenly required of them by the music."

This obsessive attention to detail threw up issues. "Cash has so much power that he could deliver when he wanted to and – from a cutting point of view – that was tricky," explains Barry. "Getting that to be clean and not distorted. All of the cutting gear at the time was valve and that softened all of this dynamic information; it softened the transience. So that's why we went to half speed, so that we could make the most of the material."

"I knew the vocal was going to be a challenge," notes Rob. "The recordings were done with very little compression, so you get sudden dynamic parts and it's trying to get those without compromising all of the bits that aren't as loud. At half speed, we could



Sam Phillips and Johnny Cash during the pair's successful years together at Sun between 1954 and 1958

CASH ADVANCE

The full list of Charly's 2018 Sun Records Johnny Cash reissues. Each album is cut from the original master tapes, with remastering by Matt Colton and Barry Grint at Alchemy Mastering and Nick Robbins at Sound Mastering

- With His Hot And Blue Guitar
- Sings The Songs That Made Him Famous
- Greatest!
- Sings Hank Williams And Other Favorite Tunes
- Now Here's Johnny Cash
- All Aboard The Blue Train
- The Original Sun Sound

> "A LOT OF INFORMATION ON THE ORIGINAL TAPES WASN'T CAPTURED... NOW, WE CAN GET A LOT MORE INFORMATION. IT'S WONDERFUL DISCOVERING WHAT'S THERE AND GETTING THAT ONTO THE NEW PRESSES"

deliver it at the best it could possibly be. It just gave me such an appreciation for what Sam Phillips captured and how he presented it."

BACK IN THE ROOM

The team managed to squeeze out yet more magic from that small, infamous live room on Union Avenue. "To me, you're actually in the room with the guys," enthuses Rob. "When you can go back to an artist from the 50s and do that, that's what you want to get over on vinyl. We had to have our A-game and more. This is where the studios and the engineers, like Barry and Nick, come into their own. They're following on the traditions that were laid down by Sam." Thanks to their studio gizmos, the *Greatest Hits…* collection exhibits these underexposed corners. "There's a hell of a lot of information on the original tapes that wasn't captured because they didn't have the technology," says Rob. "Now, we can get a lot more information, which raises a whole new set of things to tackle, but it's wonderful discovering what's there and getting that onto the new presses."

Rob stuck close to the original LPs as references to ensure accuracy. "I went back to the first pressings until I knew it backwards. I went through all of the original singles so I was clear what versions should be on each album – and I corrected a lot of the Sun master reels. We then made sure the packaging was done correctly. We've got Rachel Gutek, a Grammy-winning designer. Again, we go back to the first pressings and compare to make sure everything is in the right place."

The Cash family have given the green light, too. "The family are kept informed," says Rob. "They get copies of everything and the response I've had back from everybody is 'a good job, well done'. Going through the rest of the Sun catalogue, we owe a debt to those guys, but for me, it all starts with Johnny Cash – that coolness is absolutely based on a unique talent. There were technical limitations at the time, and it's testament to the performers and to Sam Phillips that we can still do incredible stuff with what they were capturing in the 50s – not many industries can say that." ●

How to buy... Cash ON $UN

Not only were Johnny Cash's early records big, big sellers, but before leaving his first label, he laid down myriad songs that could be repackaged – two factors which, according to **Bill Dahl**, make becoming a Cash-on-Sun collector an attainable dream

Johnny Cash was a certified hitmaker from his very first release in 1955 on Sun Records, so there aren't really any extreme rarities lurking deep in his catalogue, patiently awaiting discovery. But there are a great many highly desirable platters in all three speeds to be acquired. Finding them in mint condition is no small feat, however, considering how much his records were loved and played by the folks who originally purchased them. Here are some early Cash platters well worth hunting down – and you won't need to hold up a bank to acquire them…

JOHNNY CASH

JOHNNY CASH WITH HIS HOT AND BLUE GUITAR!
SUN LP 1220

Cash's 1957 debut album was the Man In Black's first time on microgroove (Sun's too), and the LP is quite collectable. Copies have changed hands in the $100-and-up range for near-mint first pressings (Sun kept Cash LPs in print for a long time; later ones often in undesirable rechannelled stereo). Numbered 2014 Record Store Day reissues have gone from $50 to $80.

ALL ABOARD THE BLUE TRAIN WITH JOHNNY CASH
SUN LP 1270

$30 was all a nice copy of Cash's sixth album would bring its seller in a recent online sale. The cover implied that the contents were new, since Cash was on a Western kick at Columbia, but in truth, they were anything but. Apart from the title track, everything on the disc had already found its way onto one of Cash's previous Sun albums prior to this 1962 release.

JOHNNY CASH SINGS: THE SONGS THAT MADE HIM FAMOUS
SUN LP 1235

Sam Phillips made sure to press up a new Cash set every year, extending the practice long after Johnny left the label for Columbia. His 1958 Sun encore set was loaded with hits, yet a near-mint copy can sell for $80 and $50 isn't out of the question for decent copies. British pressings on London are an even thriftier proposition at £25-30.

GREATEST!
SUN LP 1240

By 1959, Cash had settled in at Columbia, and Phillips was making do with whatever he had in the vaults to fill up singles and albums. That wasn't a bad thing, and this collection contains gems such as *Luther's Boogie* and *Thanks A Lot*. A rare Canadian copy on the London imprint moved for a cool $350 back in 2015, but recent stock US pressings have generally fallen into the $50-100 range.

JOHNNY CASH SINGS HANK WILLIAMS... AND OTHER FAVORITE TUNES
SUN LP 1245

Having a mere four Hank songs didn't deter Phillips for this 1960 album. *Folsom Prison Blues* and *I Walk The Line* were back, along with six titles (*Mean Eyed Cat*, *Come In Stranger*, *Give My Love To Rose*, *Straight A's In Love*, *Next In Line*, and *I Love You Because*) new to Johnny's library. A sealed copy has gone for $128; $50-80 is more the norm.

NOW HERE'S JOHNNY CASH
SUN LP 1255

Plenty of copies of Cash's fifth Sun album have sold over the past few years in the $30-50 range, although a couple of sealed copies went for $100. Phillips still had plenty of masters to choose from in 1961 that had yet to see release on album, notably *Hey! Porter*. Cash deftly zips through *Sugartime* and *Oh Lonesome Me*, both tracks culled from his final batch of sessions in mid-'58.

ORIGINAL SUN SOUND OF JOHNNY CASH
SUN LP 1275

Phillips assembled one more album in 1964, featuring Lead Belly's *Goodnight Irene*, Hank Snow's *Two Timin' Woman*, the trad *New Mexico*, Ted Daffan's *Always Alone* and *Born To Lose*, and Cash's *Wide Open Road* and *Belshazzar*. With all that unfamiliar material on board, it's surprising that $20-30 can buy an acceptable original copy.

CRY! CRY! CRY! /HEY, PORTER!
SUN 221

Sam Phillips was clearly fond of exclamation marks… As it turned out, *Cry! Cry! Cry!* proved a sizeable country hit, the first rung on Johnny's rapid climb to stardom. The single sold quite well, yet clean copies of the 78 frequently bring anywhere from $100 to $200 from avid Sun collectors. Not surprisingly, far more 45s exist and they vary wildly price-wise – as high as $150 and as low as $30.

FOLSOM PRISON BLUES/SO DOGGONE LONESOME
SUN 232

A VG+ 78 copy of Cash's second hit and eternal signature theme brought a hefty £230 in 2015, though $50-150 is more common stateside. There has been a slew of them over the last few years, so patience should bring one at a reasonable price. *Folsom Prison Blues* on a Sun 45 seems to start about where the 78s leave off – $50 should cover a very acceptable copy.

I WALK THE LINE/ GET RHYTHM
SUN 241

Cash's most beloved song of all is a very worthwhile item on the open market – so much so, that one very attractive 78 copy went for $300, one for more than $250 and several others for 'only' $100 and up. But unless you have a bank-account bulge akin to that of the Million Dollar Quartet, you can hold out for something in the $40-75 range, because *I Walk The Line* is by no means rare, especially on 45rpm.

FOLSOM PRAISE

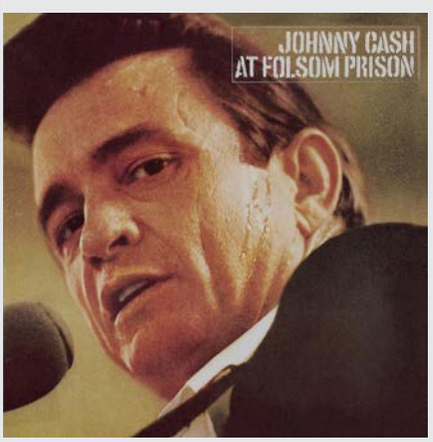
From the raw energy of James Brown at The Apollo, to Hendrix aflame at Monterey, there are few live albums as formidable as Johnny Cash's crudely recorded classic, *At Folsom Prison*. **Rik Flynn** explores the making of a rebel-country masterpiece, 50 years on from its recording and release…

13 January, 1968 would not only prove to be a catalytic day for Johnny Cash, but it would also mark a major milestone in music history. When Cash, clad in fresh black suit, stepped up to the mic in Dining Room 2 at Folsom Prison, he also stood at a major crossroads in his life and career. A casual introduction – "Hello, I'm Johnny Cash" – uttered to an audience of over a thousand Folsom inmates was enough to make the place erupt. Just like that, Cash was reborn.

Not only was it likely the first time he'd used that enduring opening line, but he also set in motion a live LP that would immediately reverse a four-year slump and return the star to the top of the pile. More than that, *At Folsom Prison* would immortalise Cash's image as the true pariah of country. That iconic image was – and still remains – an alluring one, but Cash's Folsom epiphany was far from a mere expression of personal rebellion. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

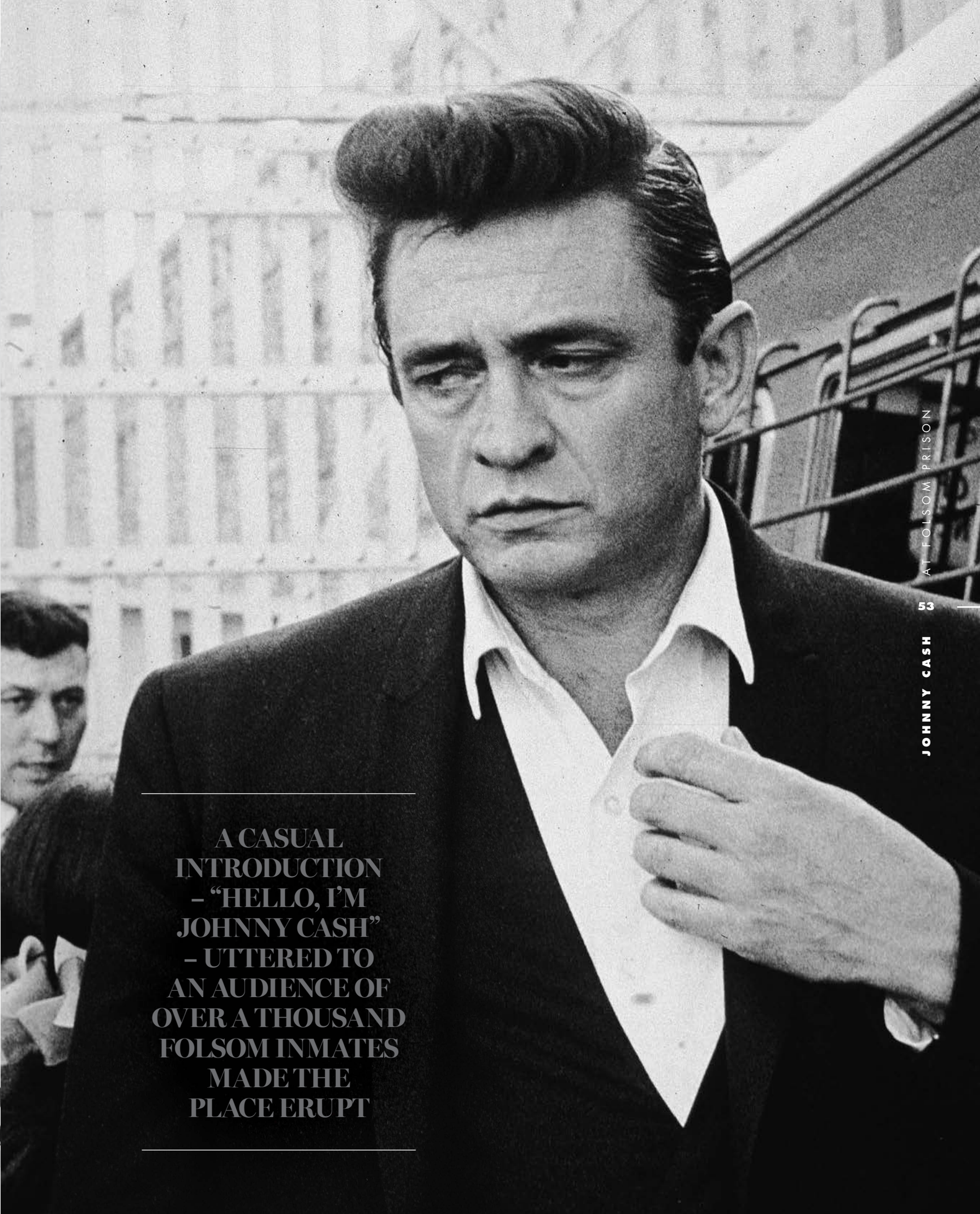
Inspiration first struck when Johnny saw Crane Wilbur's powerful 1951 film *Inside The Walls Of Folsom Prison* while stationed in Germany. Inspired by the film, Cash cut 1955 Sun single *Folsom Prison Blues*, his commercial breakthrough. It may have been a very different story for its inhabitants, but Folsom would prove a lucky omen for Cash – twice. Johnny's first prison gig took place at Huntsville State Prison in Texas in 1957. Hastily installed in the middle of the arena after a prison rodeo, Cash and band were marred by terrible sound and barely coped with truly biblical weather.

Even so, the show had a profound effect and reinvigorated his fascination with prison songs. "I kept trying to perform and the harder I tried, the harder it rained, and the more they cheered and the more fun we all had," he recalled. "Then I started digging into the repertoire from my childhood… the prison songs – *I'm Here To Get My Baby Out Of Jail* for one, *Columbus Stockade Blues*, and Jimmie Rodgers' jail songs and the classic tragedy songs of country music. I knew that if I could ever get a live recording in a prison, it was gonna be something really worth listening to." Over the following decade, Cash racked up over 30 shows in penitentiaries – always unpaid. Far from crass self-glorification, Cash became a leading activist for prison reform.



June and Johnny at a prison in Arkansas, 1969

Johnny Cash re-signs his contract with Columbia, circa 1960



A CASUAL INTRODUCTION – "HELLO, I'M JOHNNY CASH" – UTTERED TO AN AUDIENCE OF OVER A THOUSAND FOLSOM INMATES MADE THE PLACE ERUPT

THE RISE AND FALL OF GLEN SHERLEY

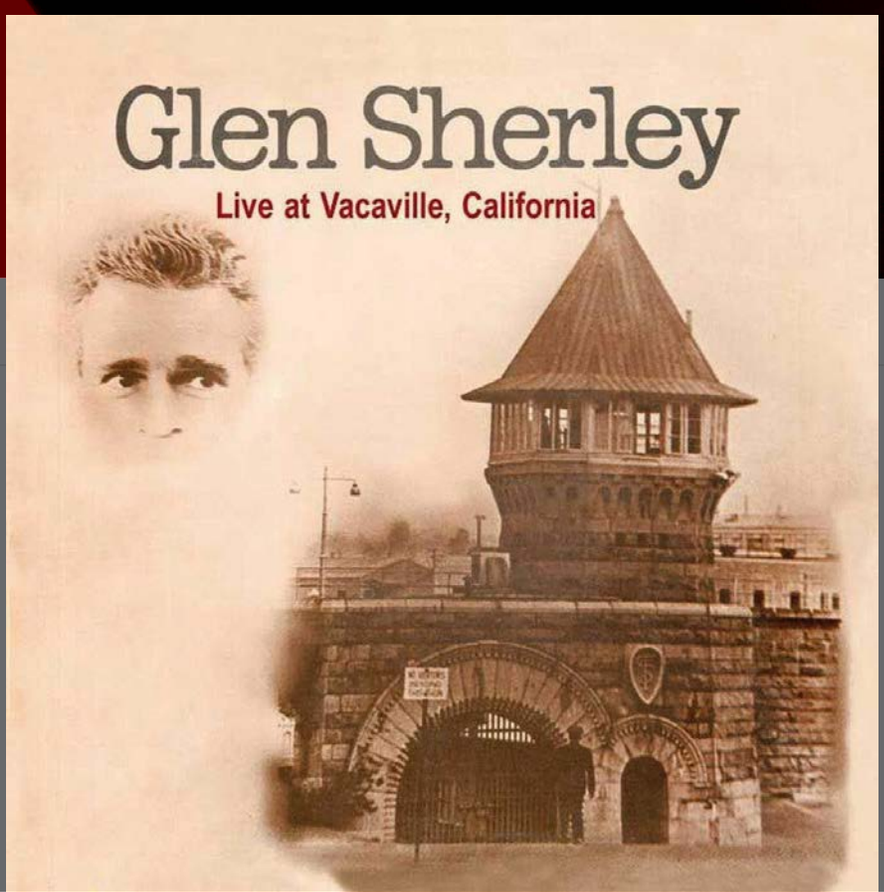
At the show, Cash performed a song by a Folsom inmate…

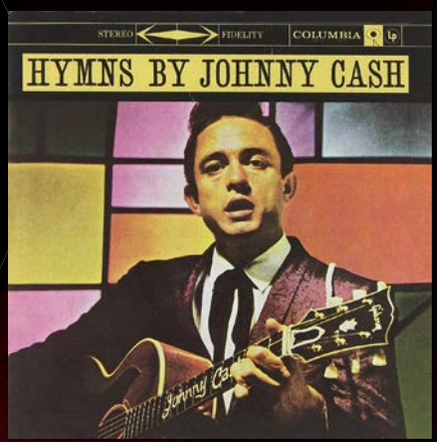
It was during Cash's pre-show rehearsals that he and his band fine-tuned their set – and it was there that Johnny first heard *Greystone Chapel*, written by Folsom inmate Glen Sherley. Once again, Earl Green had approached Reverend Gressett, this time to request that Cash listened to the demo he had made with Sherley. "He was a terrific writer," Green told Streissguth. "I told him… Johnny was coming to Folsom and he ought to write something and we'll try to get it to him. And he wrote that in about 30 minutes." Gene Beley recalled: "It blew us all away. In fact, I remember very specifically kidding John, saying, 'Wow, if they let this guy out of prison, he'll put you out of business!'." Cash connected to the song immediately. "The song *Folsom Prison Blues* brought me to Folsom, but there I saw the real human face of the people that were there," he remembered. Sherley was to be told nothing about it, but was seated on the front row.

Sherley had spent much of his life incarcerated and it was not until he found himself serving time at Folsom that his passion for songwriting had blossomed.

After the Folsom show, Cash and Sherley became firm friends. Once transferred to the low-security Vacaville prison in 1969, Sherley also befriended fellow inmate, Western Swing star Spade Cooley, who helped him in his songwriting pursuits. While at Vacaville, Glen found success with *Portrait Of My Woman*, a country hit for Eddy Arnold in 1970, as well as recording his own eponymous live album. What's more, when he was eventually released from prison in 1971, he was greeted at the gates by Cash himself. Cash would go on to hire him to write songs for his publishing company, House Of Cash, as well as taking him on the road.

The story is a tragic one, however. It appears an institutionalised Sherley couldn't cope with life on the outside and soon fell foul of drugs and alcohol. After reported death threats to members of Cash's band, there was nothing Cash could do but drop Sherley from the tour – and things swiftly took a downward turn. Sherley shot himself on 11 May, 1978 at his brother's house in Gonzales, California. He was 42 years old.





DARKNESS DESCENDS

In the summer of 1958, Cash turned his back on his mentor, visionary Sun Records boss Sam Phillips, to sign with Columbia. The allure of the big bucks had proved too hard to resist and two fellow Sun alumnus, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley, had followed a similar path. While the future looked rosy for the Arkansas boy, things were soon to take a downward turn. His Columbia debut, *The Fabulous Johnny Cash* – and its gospel companion *Hymns By Johnny Cash* – fared well, but by major-label album three, Johnny's addiction to amphetamines and barbiturates began to

take hold. Gaunt, wild-eyed and hooked by the decade's close, the macabre, death-obsessed album *Songs Of Our Soil* spoke volumes.

As his fame grew through the 60s, so did his addiction, and by 1968, with a painful divorce still fresh in his memory, things could easily have gone further south. "Columbia Records didn't invite any press [to Folsom] as they thought Cash would show up stoned," wrote *LA Times* journalist Robert Hilburn – one of the few journalists allowed into Folsom with Cash. But nonetheless, 1968 would prove a transformative year. Whether via a drug-induced suicide-attempt-turned-spiritual epiphany in Tennessee's Nickajack Cave (later cast in doubt), or via a supposed ultimatum from new love June Carter, Johnny was apparently finally clean. His drug habit may have been under control, but his career still badly needed a shot in the arm. Luckily, aside from giving him *carte blanche* to record his beloved gospel (something Sun had snubbed), Columbia also allowed Cash to finally fulfil his other dream – to record a show in a prison.

A pivotal player in the Folsom story was Texan producer Bob Johnston.

FOR CASH, 1968 WOULD PROVE A TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR... HIS DRUG HABIT MAY HAVE BEEN UNDER CONTROL, BUT HIS CAREER STILL BADLY NEEDED A SHOT IN THE ARM

Johnny and June leaving a prison in Kansas after a visit in 1968

WIN!

Enter our competition to win limited-edition Johnny Cash vinyl courtesy of our friends at Sony Legacy and wearevinyl.com

We have two pairs of Johnny Cash reissues: the limited-edition *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison,* and *Johnny Cash At San Quentin* to give away to two lucky readers.

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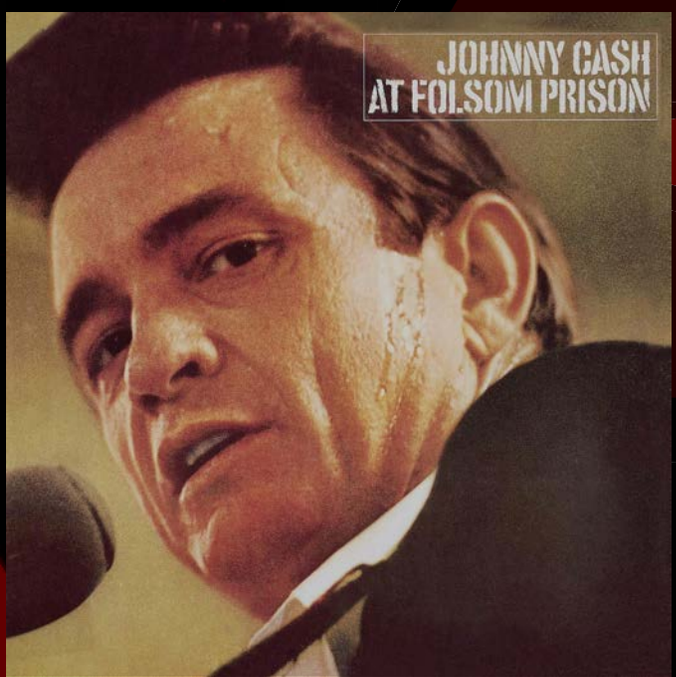
For your chance to win both records, go to www.longlivevinyl.net/cashcomp and answer the following question: In which US state was Johnny Cash born?

A. Arkansas
B. Tennessee
C. Texas



Recently arrived in Nashville to take the reins at Columbia, Johnston had risen from engineering country and rockabilly to produce records for the likes of Bob Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel. By early 1967, the aggressively forward-looking Johnston was boss of Columbia's Nashville office and, without him, Cash's seminal recording may never have taken place. Live albums weren't exactly known for huge sales, and (according to Cash) the old guard had refused him several times since he first canvassed them in 1962. This new, outspoken Nashville representative gave Cash the go-ahead, no questions asked.

"Although charges of bizarre behaviour and self-promotion plagued Johnston's reign in Nashville," wrote biographer Michael Streissguth, "he justified his ascent in just one important move. He green-lighted the album *At Folsom Prison* and pushed the recovering singer into 1968's formidable tide of change."

There were other central characters entwined within the narrative. It was Folsom inmate and bandleader Earl Green who had asked prison pastor Reverend Floyd Gressett if he thought Cash could be persuaded to put on a show there. In fact, Cash had agreed and performed a bare-bones show in the prison yard back in 1966. During the visit, he'd asked about recording there and – after some negotiation – had been given the go-ahead for January 1968. On 10 January of that year, Cash and his wife checked into a motel in Sacramento in preparation for two days of rehearsal – unusual for Cash, and a clear indication that he took this latest venture very seriously indeed. As well as Carl Perkins, The Statler Brothers and the Tennessee Three (Luther Perkins, Marshall Grant and WS Holland), also in attendance were photographer Jim Marshall, Hilburn and young reporter Gene Beley. Then Governor Of California, Ronald Reagan even stopped by on the second day to wish them luck.

A few days later, a stony-faced Cash and entourage arrived at Folsom's imposing 18-foot granite walls. A look a Marshall's photographs reveals a palpable uneasiness amongst the group. "Two weeks before, some prisoners

had taken a guard hostage," remembered Hilburn. "Officials told the inmates that if anyone left their chair during the concert, they would stop the show, and there were guards with rifles on walkways above the stage." While it may have been a few years past, to add to the hype, Cash's last major press exposure was as a man in handcuffs, having been arrested in El Paso for smuggling pills out of Mexico. It was a public image that he would put to great use. "The hook was so undeniable," wrote Streissguth, "that one wonders why the album hadn't been recorded years before."

Cash stood nervously in the wings, while Carl Perkins and The Statler Brothers warmed up the crowd. Although two shows were planned to be sure of enough usable material, these concerns proved unfounded. The first performance, at 9.40am, captured the occasion perfectly, with only two songs from the second concert, *Give My Love To Rose* and *I Got Stripes*, eventually used.

OUTLAW COUNTRY

Folsom Prison Blues was an obvious opener, with Cash's gruesome line: "I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die," but the wave of cheers that followed on the record was a crafty addition. The inmates were far too aware of the guards and the cheers were overdubbed in Nashville after the fact.

The remainder of the two sets that day consisted of a medley of crime-themed cuts, some novelty crowd-pleasers and a smattering of Cash classics. Tunes such as Merle Travis' *Dark As A Dungeon*, *I Still Miss Someone* (Cash's ballad of love and loneliness), the Folsom-referencing *Cocaine Blues*, prison songs *The Wall* and *Send A Picture Of My Mother*, *25 Minutes To Go* (about a man awaiting his death at the gallows) and the aforementioned country classic *I'm Here To Get My Baby Out Of Jail*, made for an authentic rallying cry.

The harmonica-heavy version of 'fiddle player's national anthem' *Orange Blossom Special*, plus a double serving of humorous Jack Clement crowd-pleasers – *Dirty Ol' Egg-Sucking Dog* and *Flushed From The Bathroom Of Your Heart*, elevated the mood at the appropriate moments.

Cash's success also owed a great deal to June and her infectious country-gal humour. The inmates certainly enjoyed her playful, pointed jests, particularly set against the steely subject matter that held a mirror up to their plight. Musically, the couple's rapport was undeniable as they parried on a joyful rendition of recent hit *Jackson*. *Green, Green Grass Of Home* resonated too, before *Greystone Chapel*, written by Folsom inmate Glen Sherley, closed the show as a poignant sign-off. Cash's performance of the song was more than just charity, as Streissguth notes: "*Greystone Chapel* sealed the bond between Cash and the inmates that day."

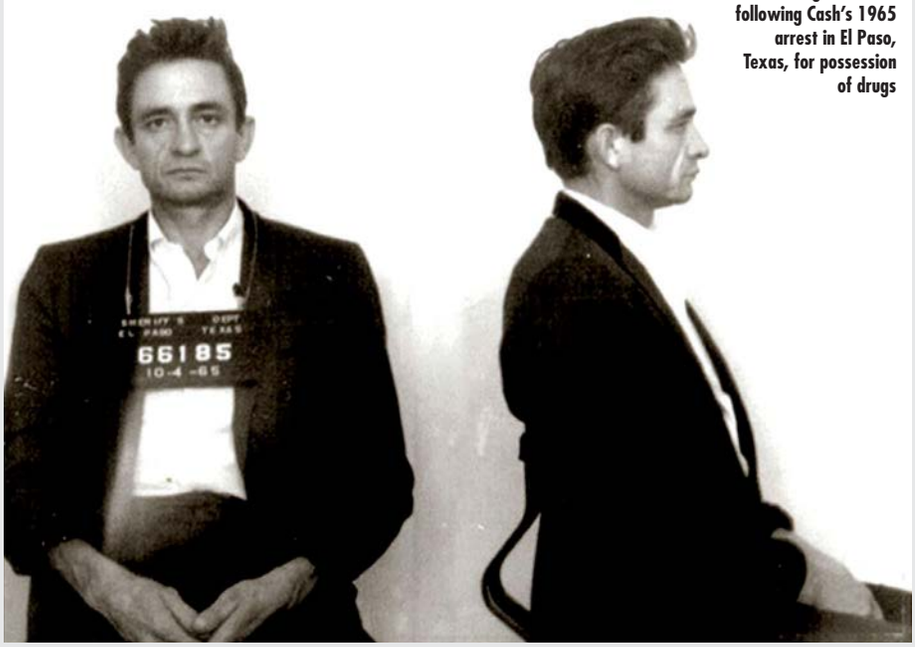
Beley recalled: "(Sherley) jumped out of his seat, I swear, about two feet in the air. I've never to this day seen a happier man."

Although Columbia offered little initial promotion, when released in May 1968, *At Folsom Prison* found its way to the top of the US Country chart and into the Top 20 of the Billboard, a spectacular feat considering the hit parade was stacked with R&B giants such as Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding and James Brown. The LP went on to sell over three million copies, while lead single *Folsom Prison Blues* entered the Top 40, ending a lengthy dry spell for Cash.

The plight of many men lay within the grooves of Cash's *Folsom…* album, as does the story of his own redemption – and perhaps therein lies the reason why it was universally appreciated by country, rock and pop fans alike. Cash's duality was never clearer, emerging from crushing addiction to return to faith, while at the same time delivering a bold message to the establishment.

"I think it tapped into the pure rebellion and just that passionate impulse to overthrow, to change things," noted daughter Rosanne Cash. "Paradoxically, given what the subject matter and the material of Folsom was, that was the moment that he came to the light." ●

THE PLIGHT OF MANY MEN LAY WITHIN THE GROOVES OF CASH'S *AT FOLSOM PRISON* ALBUM, AS DOES THE STORY OF HIS OWN REDEMPTION



The famous prison mugshot taken following Cash's 1965 arrest in El Paso, Texas, for possession of drugs

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THE ESSENTIAL LIVE ALBUMS

While it's not possible to fully capture the rush and excitement of a live gig on record, there are a fair few albums that make a pretty good fist of it, as **Gary Tipp** discovers…

Live LPs have always been a curious breed. For many vinyl collectors they're not an option, regarded simply as a contract-fulfilling stop-gap in an artist's discography… Just products of convenience aimed at the die-hard fan, which an all-too-willing record company is happy to cash in on before the next album proper is ready to be released.

Some are seen as being either packed with inferior run-throughs of the hits, in a glorified 'Best Of' package with the unwanted bonus of crowd noise over the top, or, conversely, full of extended bouts of indulgent jamming and even, heaven forbid, 20-minute drum solos. To add insult to injury, some recordings are so heavily overdubbed in post-production to iron out flaws, they end up a long way from being an authentic document of what was actually played on the night in question.

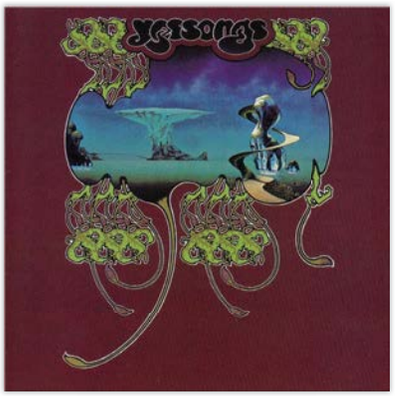
So why is *Long Live Vinyl* dedicating a whole load of pages to live albums? The simple answer is, because when they're done right, as are the 40 great examples we list here, they can form an essential part of any record collection. Landmark live albums such as The Who's *Live At Leeds*, *Yessongs* and the Ramones' *It's Alive*, for example, are a permanent record of a band's classic line-up captured at the very peak of their powers. And sadly, as we all know, classic line-ups don't last forever.

Other albums witness bands taking their own songs and running with them to inspired new places. For instance, Deep Purple's *Made In Japan* sees a strong set of album tracks presented with different arrangements, stretched out to their limits to devastating effect. There are some bands – Hawkwind (*Space Ritual)* and Grateful Dead *(Live/Dead)* spring immediately to mind – whose artistic legacies have always been based primarily on live performance rather than studio recording.

Some of the best live albums can even provide an intimate connection with a performer who, due to trouble with time or geography, you never had the opportunity to see live. James Brown's *Live At The Apollo*, for instance, was recorded in Harlem in 1962, but crackles with such atmosphere that you could have been in the room with him.

Live albums can even qualify as lasting slices of rock history, as Bob Dylan's *Live 1966…* testifies – with the infamous anti-electric "Judas!" heckle caught on vinyl in perpetuity for all to hear. The same could be said of *Metallic KO*, which captures the sound of bottles smashing into amps after narrowly missing Iggy's head.

Our Essential Albums are ranked in order from 40 to 1 – and, in the first instance, we always set 'rarest' and 'latest' prices according to the UK release on vinyl, unless otherwise stated.



40 YESSONGS

YES (1973)

Clocking in at comfortably over the two-hours-and-a-bit mark and across six sides of vinyl, this classic live triple showcases the Brit-proggers at their virtuoso peak. The epic set is a crowd-pleasing one that mostly cherry-picks from *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. Roger Dean's fantasy-world gatefold artwork completes the 'none-more-prog' package.

Rarest 1973 Atlantic **£20-£30**
Latest Out of print

39 IF YOU WANT BLOOD YOU'VE GOT IT

AC/DC (1979)

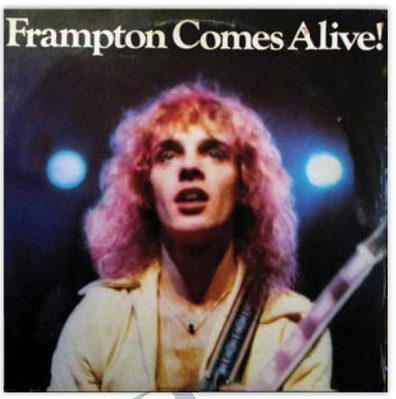
If You Want Blood… was recorded on 1978's *Powerage* tour, with much of the released cut coming from the final gig in Glasgow, Angus and Malcolm's birthplace. This homecoming appearance was a rollicking riff-heavy affair, as you'd imagine, with raucous versions of *Whole Lotta Rosie* and *The Jack* whipping the crowd into a state far, far beyond frenzy.

Rarest 1978 Atlantic **£20-£25**
Latest 2009 Columbia **£20**

38 BEFORE THE DAWN
KATE BUSH (2016)

The elusive Kate returned to the stage following a 35-year absence for a 22-date residency at the Hammersmith Apollo in 2014. Committing such a momentous and multi-sensory show to vinyl sounds like a thankless task, but such was the dazzling power of Bush's performance that this triple album ranks as a worthy addition to her near-peerless discography.

£ *Latest* 2016 Fish People **£40-£45**



36 FRAMPTON COMES ALIVE!
PETER FRAMPTON (1976)

The former Humble Pie guitarist with the well-conditioned bubble perm struck it multi-platinum with this sentimental set of radio-friendly AOR slushiness. One of the biggest-selling live albums of all time, it includes the hits *Baby, I Love Your Way* and *Show Me The Way,* complete with the curious 'talk box' guitar effect.

£ *Rarest* 1976 A&M **£40**
Latest 2008 A&M (US) **£20**

34 AT THE VILLAGE GATE
NINA SIMONE (1962)

Late in 1961, Nina Simone sat down at the piano at the cosy Village Gate club in New York and treated the hushed Manhattan audience to a majestic set of her unique brand of earth-shatteringly brilliant jazz-soul. Simone is captured intimately here in her early prime. Comedian Richard Pryor was the opening act – now that's quite a double bill.

£ *Rarest* 1962 Colpix (US) **£40-£50**
Latest 2017 DOL **£15**

37 KICK OUT THE JAMS
MC5 (1969)

Detroit's inflammatory counterculture vultures MC5 had no truck with the flower-power culture of the day and their deafening debut was a hippie-baiting, politicised slab of rabble-rousing garage rock. This was punk before it was even invented. Elektra couldn't handle the band's shit-stirring stridency and promptly kicked them off the label.

£ *Rarest* 1969 Elektra Mono, Orange Label **£200**
Latest 2012 Elektra **£25-£30**

35 METALLIC KO
IGGY AND THE STOOGES (1976)

As much a historical document as a live album, *Metallic KO* was recorded at The Stooges' final show at the Michigan Palace in Detroit in 1974. The sound isn't exactly crystal, but it's clear enough to pick up the sound of breaking glass as bottles are thrown at the stage from a fantastically hostile audience. Soon after the gig, Iggy checked into a mental hospital.

£ *Rarest* 1976 Skydog **£30**
Latest 2016 Jungle **£20**

33 SPECIAL MOVES
MOGWAI (2010)

The curtain-closers to many an indie festival, the Scottish post-rock vets' sonic assault-and-battery on the senses has always translated well into the live arena. Captured over three nights in Brooklyn, the Glaswegians seamlessly deliver a rousing set of cochlea-crushing instrumentals – with *Mogwai Fear Satan* an especially powerful highlight, as ever.

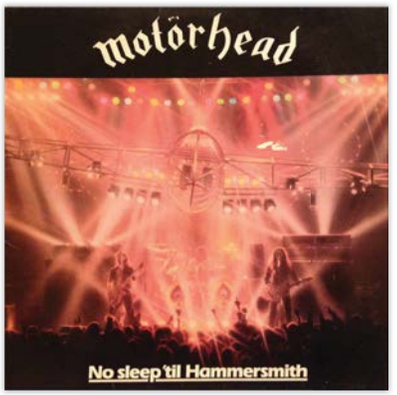
£ *Rarest* 2010 Rock Action Triple **£40**

32 LES BAINS DOUCHES 18 DECEMBER 1979

JOY DIVISION (2001)

As magnificent as *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer* undoubtedly are, Joy Division's studio albums were dominated by Martin Hannett's distinctive production and belied the band's power and intensity as live performers. *Les Bains Douches*, recorded in 1979 shortly before Ian Curtis's death, puts the record straight as post-punk's most important band flawlessly blast through their set of classic songs.

Rarest 2001 Get Back, blue vinyl **£40**
Latest 2015 DOL **£20**



30 NO SLEEP 'TIL HAMMERSMITH

MOTÖRHEAD (1981)

With *Ace Of Spades* first up on the setlist, this is the classic Motörhead line-up playing the classic Motörhead hits at a speed that is way beyond breakneck and an intensity registering many levels past fierce. With such a prodigious appetite for amphetamines, it's highly unlikely Lemmy even had a snooze when he finally made it to his west-London destination.

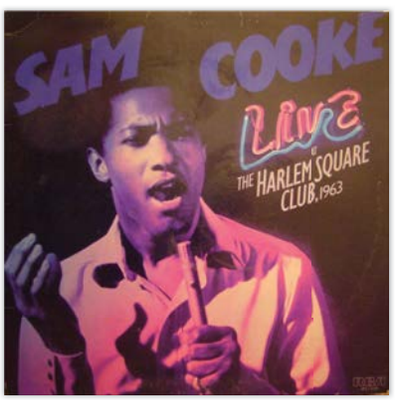
Rarest 1981 Bronze gold vinyl **£40**
Latest 2014 Bronze **£25**

28 LIVE IN EUROPE

OTIS REDDING (1967)

Fresh from stealing the show at the Monterey Festival, the Southern soulster was committed to vinyl on the Stax/Volt Revue European tour of 1967 at the Olympia Theatre in Paris. With Booker T. & The MG's as his backing band, the Big O's raw vocal power is captured in sensational form, with *Try A Little Tenderness* bringing the show to an emotional climax.

Rarest 1968 Stax **£30**
Latest 2014 Volt **£20**

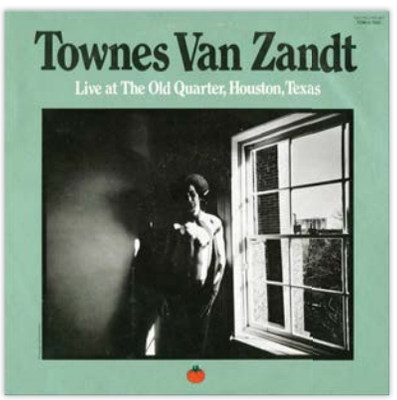


31 LIVE AT THE HARLEM SQUARE CLUB, 1963

SAM COOKE (1985)

The King Of Soul's live performances were a far grittier, rawer and more explosive affair than his safer studio output. With record execs wary of preserving Cooke's clean-cut persona, this sensational slab of vinyl was left to languish in the vaults, only to be released some 22 years later. Luckily for all, it finally found the light of day.

Rarest 1985 RCA **£20-£25**
Latest 2010 RCA **£20**

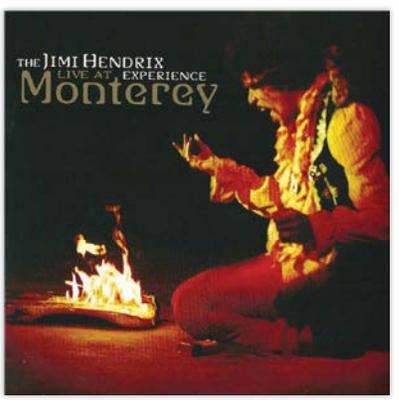


29 LIVE AT THE OLD QUARTER...

TOWNES VAN ZANDT (1977)

In July 1973, the late, great country bluesman Van Zandt performed a string of shows over five sweltering nights at the Old Quarter club in Houston, Texas. The performances were recorded on a portable four-track and succeed wonderfully in capturing the intimacy between a very talented songwriter, his guitar and an enthralled, sweaty audience.

Rarest 1977 Tomato (US) **£80-£95**
Latest 2009 Domino **£25**

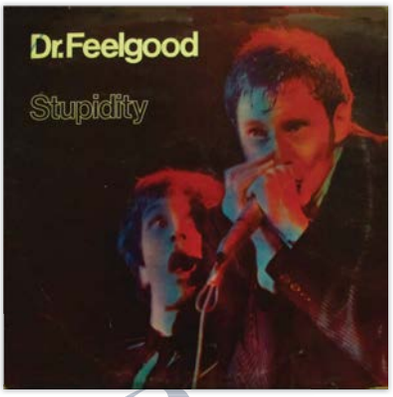


27 LIVE AT MONTEREY

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE (2007)

Before flagrantly abusing health-and-safety regs by dousing his instrument in lighter fluid and setting it ablaze, consummate showman Hendrix had used his Strat to fry the minds of the festival crowd. Nobody had played rock guitar like Jimi before he arrived on the scene – few have grazed his cosmic sphere since.

Rarest 2007 Experience Hendrix (US) **£30**
Latest 2014 Legacy **£20**



26 STUPIDITY
DR. FEELGOOD (1976)

Dr. Feelgood's hard-driving, stripped-down take on the Delta blues made them live legends on the pub-rock circuit. *Stupidity* catches the band at the peak of their perspirational powers, with Wilko's choppy guitar butting up against Lee Brilleaux's ballsy vocals. It was the first live album in the UK to go to No. 1 on the first week of release.

Rarest 1976 United Artists, with bonus single **£40-£50**
Latest 2016 Grand **£26**

24 IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW
VAN MORRISON (1974)

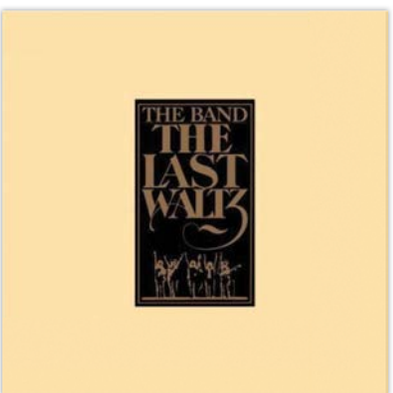
Backed by the strings and horns of the 11-piece Caledonia Soul Orchestra, Morrison's 1973 US tour spawned a classic live album. *It's Too Late To Stop Now* was recorded at shows in LA, Santa Monica and London, and finds Van The Man at the top of his powers, with a collection of songs perfectly showcasing his own individual blend of jazz, rock and soul.

Rarest 1974 Warner Brothers **£30**
Latest 2016 Legacy **£15-£20**

22 LIVE SANTA MONICA '72
DAVID BOWIE (2008)

The official albums *David Live* and *Stage* fell short of capturing the full essence of Bowie's major-artist status as a live performer, the strongest testament of which is this 1972 extended live radio broadcast. Available for years as a much-sought-after bootleg, this is the sound of Ziggy and his arachnid bandmates on the verge of conquering the world.

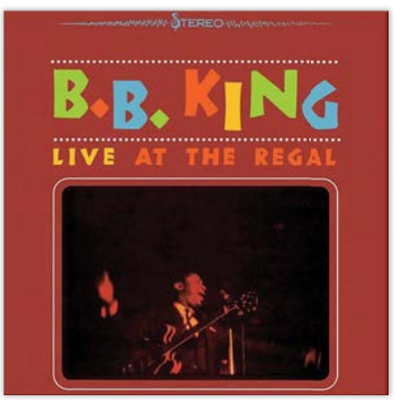
Rarest 2004 EMI **£30-£40**
Latest 2016 Parlophone **£20**



25 THE LAST WALTZ
THE BAND (1978)

The Last Waltz was The Band's farewell concert on Thanksgiving Day 1976 at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom. It was an epic, sentimental affair and a suitably star-studded send-off, with turns from Ronnie Hawkins (the man they first backed), Muddy Waters, Eric Clapton, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison and Bob Dylan (the man they most famously backed).

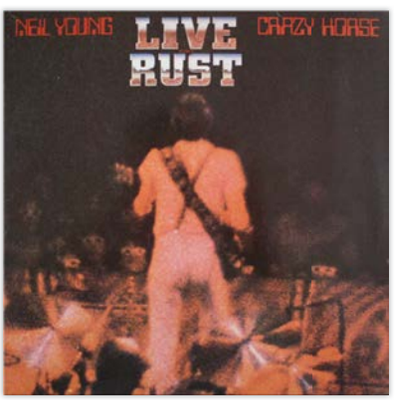
Rarest 1978 Warner Brothers **£40**
Latest 2016 Rhino **£30**



23 LIVE AT THE REGAL
B.B. KING (1965)

With the release of *Live At The Regal* in 1965, the long-reigning King Of The Blues served up one of the genre's greatest concert albums. The Chicago venue was well known for serving up an atmosphere and the crowd's excited reception to King's virtuoso playing virtually jumps out of the grooves. Luther Allison's *Live In Chicago* is also highly recommended.

Rarest 1965 HMV **£60-£70**
Latest 2011 Ace **£20-£25**



21 LIVE RUST
NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE (1979)

Neil Young fans are spoilt for choice when it comes to live albums, more than any artist on this list. *Live Rust*, recorded during his 1978 *Rust Never Sleeps* tour, is a career-spanning run-through that sees him take on the dual mantle of folky acoustic songwriter and the leader of hard-rocking partners-in-crime Crazy Horse. *Live At Massey Hall 1971* is well worth getting.

Rarest 1979 Reprise **£30-£40**
Latest 2017 Reprise **£20**

20 LIVE!
FELA KUTI WITH GINGER BAKER (1971)

After sitting behind the drums for Cream and Blind Faith, the legendary sticksman visited Nigeria to pursue his fascination with African music. It was there he linked up with Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti, and the two appear together on this undeniably funky album, along with Fela's band Africa '70, featuring fellow rhythm master Tony Allen.

Rarest 1971 Regal Zonophone **£75**
Latest 2014 Knitting Factory (US import) **£30**

18 LIVE/DEAD
GRATEFUL DEAD (1969)

Live performance was the true expression of the Dead's art, and the Haight-Ashbury sextet liberally spread their own brand of trippy, avant-garde, psychedelic jam all over this legendary double. The epic *Dark Star* kicks off the improvisational proceedings and fills one of the four sides, as does the cover of Bobby Bland's R&B classic *Turn On Your Love Light*.

Rarest 1969 Warner Bros **£60-£70**
Latest 2003 Rhino **£40**

16 1969: THE VELVET UNDERGROUND LIVE
THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (1974)

The Velvets were a different beast after the departure of avant-garde noisenik John Cale, but as these recorded shows in Dallas and San Francisco prove, they were still a mesmerisingly powerful live act. With Doug Yule in tow on bass, Reed, Morrison and Tucker artfully belt out tracks from all the studio albums, including the yet-to-be-released *Loaded*.

Rarest 1974 **£50-£60**
Latest Out of print

19 MADE IN JAPAN
DEEP PURPLE (1972)

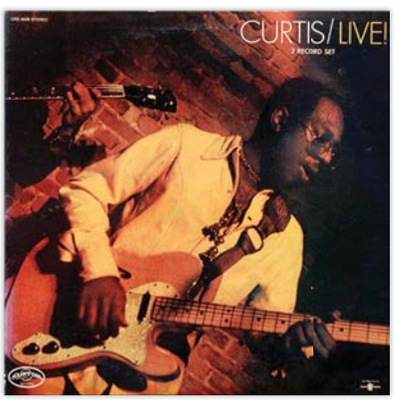
Recorded over three nights in August 1972 in Osaka and Tokyo, *Made In Japan* is one of the first great live offerings to the unholy altar of heavy metal. The beloved Deep Purple Mark II line-up, with Ian Gillan on vocals, take on a classic set of Purple songs and stretch them out to their logical limit. *Highway Star* and *Space Truckin'* stand out as highlights.

Rarest 1972 Purple Records first press **£60**
Latest 2014 Purple Records **£25**

17 LIVE
DONNY HATHAWAY (1972)

The result of performances recorded at the Troubadour in Hollywood and the Bitter End in New York, lost-too-soon soul legend Donny Hathaway and his band tear up both venues to deliver a joyously groovy album. There are covers of *Jealous Guy* and *You've Got A Friend*, but set closer *Voices Inside (Everything Is Everything)* and funky hit single *The Ghetto* steal the show.

Rarest 1972 Atlantic **£30-£35**
Latest Music On Vinyl **£25**



15 CURTIS/LIVE!
CURTIS MAYFIELD (1971)

Carving out his solo career after leaving The Impressions, Curtis Mayfield deployed his mix of sweet honeyed soul and blistering funk before a highly appreciative audience at New York's Bitter End Club in 1971. The intimacy of the venue meant there was no room for strings or horns, which, in turn, only served to heighten the up-close-and-personal live experience.

Rarest 1971 Buddah **£30-£35**
Latest 2015 Music On Vinyl **£20**

14 SPACE RITUAL
HAWKWIND (1973)

Demented intergalactic rockers Hawkwind's riff-laden legacy is rooted in live performance rather than studio recording, which explains why 1973's *Space Ritual* is considered the band's defining masterpiece. Recorded over two nights in Liverpool and London, the line-up boasts a pre-Motörhead Lemmy and manic poet-in-residence Bob Calvert. The iconic sci-fi sleeve was designed by Barney Bubbles.

Rarest 1973 United Artists **£50**
Latest 2016 Parlophone **£25**

13 ARETHA LIVE AT FILLMORE WEST
ARETHA FRANKLIN (1971)

Backed by King Curtis' mighty band, Aretha brings her gospel-charged soul to San Francisco's premier rock venue. The set opens with a piledriving version of *Respect* and is followed by a number of contemporary covers such as *Eleanor Rigby*, *Love The One You're With* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. *Spirit In The Dark* is a duet with Ray Charles, who was plucked from the crowd to join her.

Rarest 1971 Atlantic **£12**
Latest 2013 Rhino **£15**

12 STOP MAKING SENSE
TALKING HEADS (1984)

David Byrne opens with a solo version of *Psycho Killer* before building up to an expansive *Take Me To The River* with a full nine-piece band, where the Heads are joined by the mighty Bernie Worrell of Parliament fame. As the music gets bigger, so do Byrne's suits, so spare a thought for his dry cleaner. 80s art rock was never more funky.

Rarest 1999 EMI reissue **£25**

11 AT FILLMORE EAST
THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND (1971)

The Allman Brothers Band took Southern-rock jamming to new, unexplored heights. On their day, the telepathic guitar team of Duane Allman and Dickey Betts was without peer and, as the four sides of this classic live double testify, it was definitely the dazzling duo's day. Three months after the album's release, Duane was killed in a motorcycle accident.

Rarest 1971 Atlantic gatefold **£50**
Latest 2016 Mercury **£20**

Missing In (Live) Action

Bubbling under on our Essential shortlist…

Clearly, there are way more than 40 great live albums captured on vinyl, and some big artists inevitably failed to make the cut. The Beatles are noticeable absentees, but having kicked performing live on the head relatively early in their career, it's understandable they are not blessed in this department. The closest they have to a contender is *Live At The Hollywood Bowl*, which is clearly a vinyl document of historic importance, but suffers from poor sound quality and the incessant shriek of hysterical young girls.

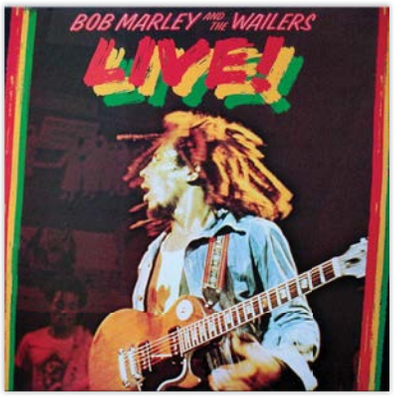
Led Zeppelin also miss out in our list with *The Song Remains The Same* and the infinitely superior live-triple *How The West Was Won* bubbling under the Top 40. Prog giants Pink Floyd also failed to make the echelons of the Essential list with psych-curio *Ummagumma*, *Delicate Sound Of Thunder* and *Pulse* all falling short of the (final) cut.

Rock giants and arena fillers Bruce Springsteen and U2 are also absent, with the former's *Live 1975-1985* and the latter's *Under A Blood Red Sky* not quite managing to chart.

10 LIVE AND DANGEROUS
THIN LIZZY (1978)

Recorded in London in 1976, and Philadelphia and Toronto in 1977, with further post-production in Paris, *Live And Dangerous* is one of rock's great live doubles and taps into the band's explosive energy as onstage performers and Phil Lynott's considerable charm as a frontman. The use of overdubs has always been a contentious issue, with some churlish critics suggesting *And Dangerous* would be a more appropriate title.

Rarest 1978 Vertigo **£30-£35**
Latest 2014 Vertigo **£20**



9 LIVE!
BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS (1975)

After a disastrous UK tour two years before that split up the original band, Bob Marley returned in total triumph for this electric and emotional landmark gig at London's Lyceum Ballroom. The performance was captured in perpetuity by The Rolling Stones' mobile studio, which was handily parked outside the venue. The definitive version of *No Woman, No Cry* was released as a single off the album.

Rarest 1975 Island **£25-£30**
Latest 2016 Tuff Gong **£25**

8 LIVE AT THE APOLLO VOL.1
JAMES BROWN (1963)

Living up to his 'hardest working man in showbusiness' tag, James Brown put in an extra shift at the Apollo Theater on 24 October, 1962. For his strenuous efforts, Mr Dynamite was rewarded with a blisteringly thrilling and wildly soulful recorded set. Full of fantastic horns, emotional intensity and sweat by the bucket, *Live At The Apollo* sets the gold standard for live-performance albums.

Rarest 1963 London **£70**
Latest 2017 DOL **£20**

Rock's Live Temple

The Tokyo venue that's become a live-music fixture

The Budokan in Tokyo was originally built to house martial-arts events; however, the celebrated venue would become forever linked with rock music. The first band to play the venue were The Beatles back in 1966, amid opposition from traditionalists, who believed their appearance was inappropriate.

Since then, a slew of live albums have been recorded in the venue. Chunks of Deep Purple's seminal *Made In Japan recor* were captured there, and even the Bay City Rollers were at it in 1977, with the less seminal *Rollerworld*.

The venue gained worldwide fame when Cheap Trick and Bob Dylan used the arena to record their live albums, *Cheap Trick At Budokan* (1978) and *Bob Dylan At Budokan* (1979).

The 80s saw The Police, Frank Sinatra, Iron Maiden, Dead Or Alive and the Michael Schenker Group all put their name to live albums from the legendary venue, while Blur's *Live At The Budokan* was recorded at the height of their Britpop fame (1995).

Chic's album of the same name was bassist Bernie Edwards' last show, as he died the next day.

7 IT'S ALIVE
RAMONES (1979)

The classic line-up of Joey, Johnny, Dee Dee and Tommy attempt to break the land speed record, with 28 frantically adrenalised mini-anthems clocking in at comfortably under the hour mark. Recorded at the Rainbow Theatre in London, there's no time for stage banter (unless '1-2-3-4' counts), for extended guitar solos, power ballads… or even breath.

Rarest 1979 Sire **£40**
Latest 2013 Sire **£20**

6 GET YER YA-YA'S OUT!

THE ROLLING STONES (1970)

Pulling mainly on live versions of material from *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed* and recorded on their infamous 1969 US tour, this is The Stones at their kickass, satanic peak. Highlights include essential versions of *Midnight Rambler* and *Sympathy For The Devil,* with the baby-faced Mick Taylor unsurpassable on lead guitar. Jagger's onstage banter is mainly concerned with his trousers not falling down.

Rarest 1970 Decca first press **£60-£70**

4 MTV UNPLUGGED IN NEW YORK

NIRVANA (1994)

Recorded five months before Kurt Cobain's death and released posthumously, what this acoustic 14-song farewell note lacks in wattage it more than makes up for in stripped-down splendour and raw emotion. With eight originals and half-a-dozen covers, including Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World*, the show-closing rendition of the traditional song *Where Did You Sleep Last Night* is a chillingly fraught postscript.

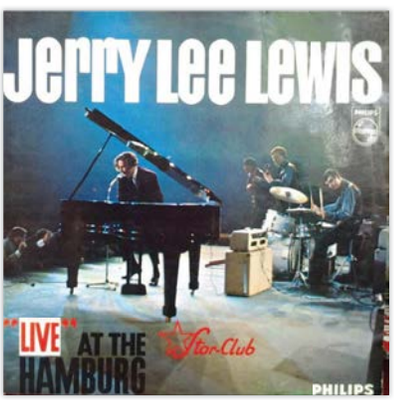
Rarest Geffen 1994 white vinyl **£50**
Latest Geffen 2016 **£20**

2 LIVE AT LEEDS

THE WHO (1970)

Such is the reverence afforded to The Who's live performance in the refectory building at Leeds University on 14 February 1970 that a heritage Blue Plaque now marks the spot. After playing festivals at Woodstock and Monterey, Townshend, Daltrey, Entwistle and Moon were a seriously tight stage act with a mountain of sound, boundless creativity and aggressive energy to burn. The crowd at the uni were fortunate enough to be bombarded with all three.

Rarest 1970 Track first press with black stamp and insert **£250**
Latest 2017 Polydor **£20**

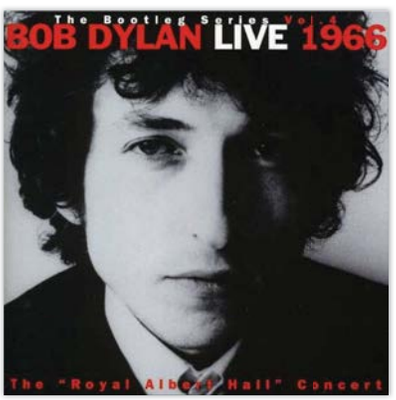


5 LIVE AT THE STAR CLUB HAMBURG

JERRY LEE LEWIS (1964)

The Killer taps into a great ball of fury to summon up the feral spirit of rock 'n' roll at The Beatles' old haunt in Germany. Never before had a poor piano been pounded so mercilessly as during this incendiary fireball of a show. Lewis is backed by The Nashville Teens, who gamely attempt to keep up with his ferocious bullet-out-of-gun delivery.

Rarest 1964 Philips **£30-£40**
Latest 2010 Bear Family **£20**



3 LIVE 1966, THE "ROYAL ALBERT HALL" CONCERT

BOB DYLAN (1998)

The quotation marks in the title of the fourth volume in Dylan's archive series attest to the fact the concert in question actually took place at Manchester's Free Trade Hall. An easy mistake… The LP is not only an incalculably important document in the history of popular music, it's also a majestic and thrilling performance from the cocksure Bob and his electric Hawks.

Rarest 1998 Columbia (US version) **£90-£120**

1 AT FOLSOM PRISON

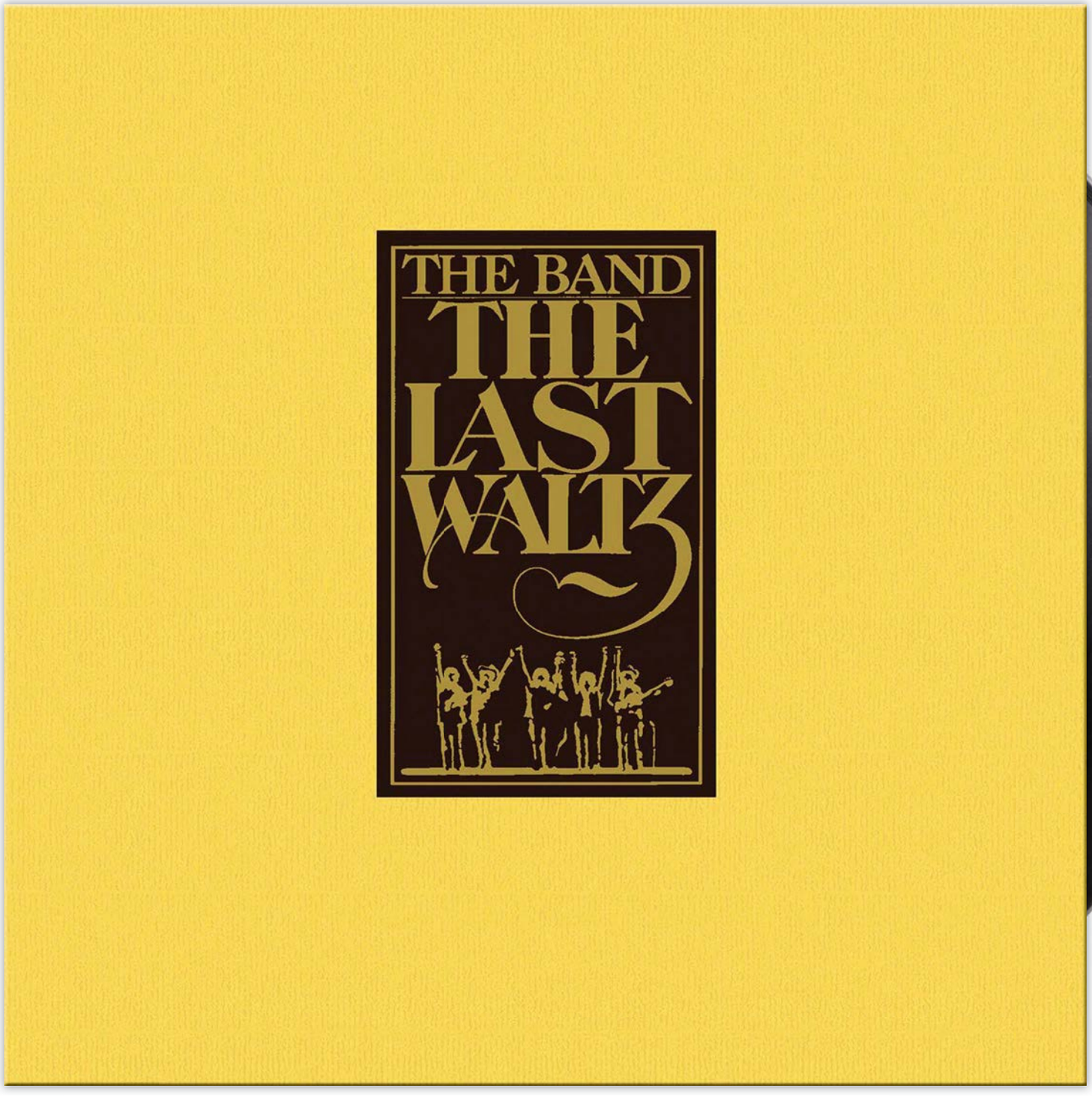
JOHNNY CASH (1968)

Cash was fascinated with the notion of performing at the maximum-security facility since penning his second Sun single, *Folsom Prison Blues*, back in 1955. 13 years later, he was onstage in front of a ward-full of volatile cons desperate for entertainment. Johnny kept the outlaw songs and gallows humour coming thick and fast with *Cocaine Blues* and *25 Minutes To Go* falling just the right side of incitement to riot. Read the full story in our feature on p52. ●

Rarest 1968 CBS **£25**
Latest 2017 Columbia **£15-£20**

Classic Album
THE BAND
THE LAST WALTZ

By the mid 70s, The Band were well past their creative peak and beset by drug and alcohol excess. But, as **Neil Crossley** explains 40 years on from its release as a triple album, their farewell concert – *The Last Waltz* – cemented their legacy as one of the most influential groups of all time…


THE BAND
THE LAST WALTZ
CLASSIC ALBUM 69 THE LAST WALTZ

NEIL YOUNG – HELPLESS

"[Neil Young's] vocal was so moving on Helpless, his beautiful Canadian song of remembrance," recalled Robertson in his 2016 memoir, Testimony. The Band have subsequently been criticised for their sloppy playing on this performance and being unfamiliar with the song. But for many fans of the album, this is missing the point – for them, Young's rendition is moving and passionate.

VAN MORRISON – CARAVAN

"The place went berserk as Van sang out: 'Turn up your raa-dio!'. He moved across the stage, and each time he let out a 'one more time,' he kicked his leg in the air or threw his arms over his head," said Robbie Robertson in Testimony. "Finally, he dropped the mic to the floor and walked off, still hitting the accents with his hand above his head."

NEIL DIAMOND – DRY YOUR EYES

Robbie Robertson was producing Neil Diamond's album at the time, but Levon Helm wasn't alone in his astonishment over the inclusion of the romantic troubadour on the list of artists invited to play at the concert. "What the fuck is he doing here?" Dylan's mercurial manager Albert Grossman allegedly said, when he flew in from New York and spotted Diamond at the Winterland Ballroom.

BOB DYLAN – BABY, LET ME FOLLOW YOU DOWN

"Bob Dylan walked out and the energy in the air turned electric," recalled Robbie Robertson in his memoir. We hit Baby, Let Me Follow You Down like we hadn't missed a beat since our first tour together, back in 1965. Each of the guys had a jubilant smile on his face like we were living the bad old days all over again."

Getty

"It just naturally grew and took on this thing of wanting to represent the different flavours of who we were"

ROBBIE ROBERTSON

On the evening of 25 November 1976 – American Thanksgiving Day – five musicians strode out onto the darkened stage of Bill Graham's Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco to play their final, farewell concert. Over the next five hours, the musicians – collectively known as The Band – would retrace their illustrious back catalogue, while inviting onstage a roll call of stellar artists of the time.

The concert was conceived as a glorious conclusion to The Band's rich career, a farewell to the fans by the five musicians who, after 16 years on the road, had decided to call it a day. "That's what *The Last Waltz* is: 16 years on the road," said The Band's guitarist and chief songwriter, Robbie Robertson. "The numbers start to scare you. I mean, I couldn't live with 20 years on the road. I don't think I could even discuss it."

The whole sumptuous event was captured on film by hip, rapid-fire-talking director Martin Scorsese, who had eagerly accepted an offer from Robbie Robertson to document the show. The resulting film, *The Last Waltz*, was released on 7 April 1978, along with a deluxe, triple-album soundtrack.

Four decades on, *The Last Waltz* is widely regarded as one of the best concert films ever made, while the triple live-album soundtrack it spawned is hailed as the record that cemented The Band's legacy.

Part of the enduring fascination of *The Last Waltz* concert resides in how it created pockets of musical chemistry among rock's royalty

STAR-STUDDED EVENT

What began as a modest send-off soon snowballed into a lavish star-studded event, with names such as Muddy Waters, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Van Morrison and Eric Clapton turning up to help The Band "to take it home", as Robertson put it.

"I thought, 'Why don't we have this celebration where we do something really musical with a bunch of our friends that we really love?'," Robertson told writer Barney Hoskyns in his 2016 book *Small Town Talk*.

"It all just felt really good, and it started out that it was just going to be Ronnie Hawkins and Bob Dylan. And then it was like: 'Well, if we're going to invite them, we should invite him and her…'. So it just naturally grew and then took on this thing of wanting to represent the different flavours of who we were."

It had been 16 years since the four Canadian musicians from southern Ontario – Robbie Robertson (guitar), Rick Danko (bass, fiddle, vocals), Richard Manuel (piano, drums, vocals) and Garth Hudson (keyboards and saxophones) – joined forces with Arkansas-born Levon Helm (drums, mandolin, vocals) in The Hawks, the backing band for wildman rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins. From 1958 to 1964, The Hawks built a reputation as the best live rock band on the Toronto music scene, with Robertson's feral guitar work coming to dominate their sound. But by 1964, The Hawks had broken away from Hawkins, tired of playing the same old

Dr. John's *Such A Night* is a honky-tonk highlight of *The Last Waltz*

Getty

songs and itching to perform original material. Robertson, Danko, Manuel, Hudson and Helm began touring and releasing singles as Levon And The Hawks and The Canadian Squires.

By 1965, their growing range of musical styles had attracted the attention of Bob Dylan, who hired them for a US tour that year. In 1967, they followed Dylan to the small rural town of Woodstock, where they began work on a rootsier set of informal sessions, which would be released eight years later as the legendary album *The Basement Tapes*. For Robertson, Danko, Manuel, Hudson and Helm, it was a watershed experience.

BIRTH OF THE BAND

As they immersed themselves in their new rural backwoods environment, the distinctive voices of the three lead singers – Manuel, Danko and Helm – began to emerge, with Manuel's sweetly soulful voice counterbalanced by Danko's shaky edginess and Helm's strong Southern tones. Most significantly, under Dylan's influence, Robertson and Manuel began to blossom as songwriters in their own right. In 1968, they released their debut album *Music From Big Pink*, a reference to the sprawling house near Woodstock where they wrote and recorded many of their best-known songs. By now, they'd named themselves The Band – because, as Helm put it, they were always known as 'the band' to various frontmen, so the name seemed to fit.

Music From Big Pink was like nothing else. In an age of acid rock and experimentation, The Band looked to the past, lyrically and sonically, delving deep into American culture to create a rootsy, stripped-down organic sound.

Contrary to the guitar solo-obsessed times, The Band opted for humility and restraint, playing for the song rather than themselves. They switched instruments according to the needs of the songs, utilising fiddles, mandolins and organs. In Helm, Danko and Manuel, they had three great lead singers, whose voices weaved flawlessly together. While the sound harked back to traditional American music, the lyrics focused on themes such as the US Civil War, small-town characters and carnivals on the edge of town.

Manuel and Robertson emerged as songwriters of real substance, the former co-writing the wrenching opening track *Tears Of Rage* with Dylan. Robertson's genius as a songwriter came to the fore on *Caledonia Mission* and *The Weight*, the latter a timeless classic on which Helm takes lead vocals, his soulful and gritty Southern tones imbuing the track with real depth and emotion.

Rural themes pervade the album, influenced by the backgrounds of Danko and Helm. "Levon and I have a powerful kinship," Danko told Hoskyns in 1995. "I grew up in southern Ontario, he grew up in Arkansas. He grew up in a cotton belt and I grew up in a tobacco belt, and it was under similar situations – a farming community and those values. And we listened to similar blues and country music, so our influences were very much the same."

"I gotta tell you, it's one of the highlights of my life to be onstage with these fellas right now"

NEIL YOUNG

In 1969, The Band released their second album, *The Band* – their most haunting and poetic work, which delved deeper into the storytelling tradition. Helm's vocals and Robertson's songwriting proved a potent combination on tracks such as *Up On Cripple Creek* and *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down*. Once more, the American South and the American Civil War provided a rich vein of inspiration. "Virgil Caine is my name and I served on the Danville train," sang Helm with utter conviction. "Till Stoneman's cavalry came/ And tore up the tracks

Van Morrison put in a stellar vocal performance on *Caravan*

Getty

The songs

Core personnel

Robbie Robertson Guitar, piano, vocals
Levon Helm Drums, mandolin
Richard Manuel Piano, organ, drums, clavinet, dobro, vocals
Rick Danko Bass, fiddle, vocals
Garth Hudson Organ, piano, accordion, synthesisers, soprano saxophone, clavinet

Guests

Paul Butterfield Harmonica, vocals
Bobby Charles Vocals
Eric Clapton Guitar, vocals
Neil Diamond Guitar, vocals
Dr. John Piano, guitar, congas, vocals
Bob Dylan Guitar, vocals
Bill Graham Master Of Ceremonies
Emmylou Harris Acoustic guitar, vocals
Ronnie Hawkins Vocals
Joni Mitchell Acoustic guitar, vocals
Van Morrison Vocals
Pinetop Perkins Piano, vocals
Carl Radle Bass
Cleotha Staples Backing vocals
Mavis Staples Backing vocals
Roebuck 'Pops' Staples Guitar, vocals
Yvonne Staples Backing vocals
Ringo Starr Drums
Muddy Waters Vocals
Ronnie Wood Guitar
Neil Young Guitar, harmonica, vocals

Horn section

Horns arranged by Henry Glover, Garth Hudson, Howard Johnson, Tom Malone, John Simon and Allen Toussaint
Rich Cooper Trumpet, flugelhorn
James Gordon Flute, tenor saxophone, clarinet
Jerry Hey Trumpet, flugelhorn
Howard Johnson Tuba, baritone saxophone, flugelhorn, bass clarinet
Charlie Keagle Clarinet, flute, saxophone
Tom Malone Trombone, euphonium, alto flute

Other musicians

Bob Margolin Guitar (Muddy Waters)
Dennis St John Drums (Neil Diamond)
John Simon Piano
Larry Packer Electric violin

Main production credits

Produced by **John Simon and Rob Fraboni**
Musical director **John Simon**

Side One

1 *THEME FROM THE LAST WALTZ*

(Robbie Robertson)
A sombre organ drone from Garth Hudson intros this track, which segues into an almost faux Latin theme – fittingly in waltz time – with Robertson on guitar, Danko on double bass, Manuel on bottleneck on a dobro and Levon Helm adding understated mandolin.

2 *UP ON CRIPPLE CREEK*

(Robbie Robertson)
The Band take the stage in darkness and launch into this opening track of the set, from their eponymous second album. Helm delivers the lyric in his soulful, gravelly tones while, as ever, laying down a fluid groove on the kit. Danko, Manuel and Robertson share the backing vocals, with Danko belting out his BVs on the third verse, the timbre of his and Helm's voices melding seamlessly.

3 *WHO DO YOU LOVE?*

(Ellas McDaniel)
First guest up is Ronnie 'The Hawk' Hawkins, the wildman rockabilly singer with whom the musicians in The Band honed their chops in the late 50s and early 60s. Here, he and The Band storm through this Bo Diddley number.

4 *HELPLESS*

(Neil Young)
"I gotta tell you, it's one of the highlights of my life to be onstage with these fellas right now," said Neil Young to the audience as he ambled onstage in a combat jacket, grinning from ear to ear. There's a wonderful poignancy as Young joins fellow Canadians Robertson and Danko at the mic, to sing the chorus on a rendition that is as warm as it is heartfelt.

5 *STAGE FRIGHT*

(Robbie Robertson)
According to writer Barney Hoskyns in his book *Across The Great Divide*, Robbie Robertson originally wrote this song for Richard Manuel to sing, but it was better suited to Danko's "nervous, tremulous voice". Danko's urgent delivery imbues the song with fresh intensity.

Side Two

1 *COYOTE*

(Joni Mitchell)
So unusual and complex were Joni Mitchell's tunings on her song *Coyote*, that it took classically trained Garth Hudson and musical director John Simon to unravel them in rehearsal at Shangri-La studios. "The guys would look at her left hand and go: 'What?'," recalled Simon. "I said: 'What's that chord?' and she said: 'I don't know the name of it. I tune my guitar this way, to make myself stupid,' in other words, to not fall into predetermined patterns."

2 *DRY YOUR EYES*

(Neil Diamond, Robbie Robertson)
Despite Levon Helm's well-publicised misgivings, Diamond – whose album Robertson had been producing at the time – delivers a rousing and surprisingly timeless rendition of this straightforward 4/4 anthem with a sprinkle of hoedown charm from The Band.

3 *IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE*

(Robbie Robertson)
The inclusion of a horn section on *The Last Waltz* elevates tracks such as this one, which is transformed from the rather passionless version from the album *Northern Lights – Southern Cross*. Featuring a new horn arrangement and a heart-rending vocal performance from Rick Danko, this beautifully crafted composition from Robertson exudes real emotion and depth. Robertson unleashes some searing guitar runs, while the soprano sax solo from Garth Hudson that outros the performance is sublime.

4 *SUCH A NIGHT*

(Mac Rebennack)
"Y'all know the Doctor – Dr. John – Mac Rebennack?" Robbie Robertson asks the audience by way of introduction, as the cult New Orleans singer-songwriter takes to the stage sporting black beret, shades and an oversized pink bow tie for a masterclass in jazz-inflected honky-tonk piano, Louisiana style – sassy, swinging and utterly infectious.

Side Three

1 *THE NIGHT THEY DROVE OLD DIXIE DOWN*

(Robbie Robertson)
The horn section takes the song to a whole new level, the trumpets evoking the American Civil War era in which it's set. As ever, Levon Helm seems the real spirit of The Band, his gritty, emotive vocals and faultless playing grounding this song with a visceral authenticity. So convincing was Helm's playing that – as musical director John Simon later revealed – his was the only performance on *The Last Waltz* unaltered by post-production overdubs.

2 *MYSTERY TRAIN*

(Junior Parker, Sam Phillips)
Levon Helm and Paul Butterfield have some fun singing unison on this track, written by blues musician Junior Parker in 1953 and released by Elvis Presley as a B-side to *I Forgot To Remember To Forget* in August 1955. It's powerful and simple, and in the hands of The Band, is a raw slice of rockabilly.

3 *MANNISH BOY*

(Mel London, Ellas McDaniel, McKinley Morganfield)

The songs *continued*

"When Muddy Waters performed *Mannish Boy*, Paul Butterfield held a note through the whole song," said Robertson. "He used circular breathing and you couldn't hear him take a breath. I had never seen or heard that before."

4 *FURTHER ON UP THE ROAD*
(Don Deadric Robey, Joe Medwick Veasey)
As anyone who has watched *The Last Waltz* film will know, one of the most notable moments of this performance is when Clapton's strap comes off his Stratocaster and Robbie Robertson takes over, delivering a blindingly efficient solo at a moment's notice.

Side Four

1 *SHAPE I'M IN*
(Robbie Robertson)
Robbie Robertson did little to disguise the fact that this song's sense of dread was about Richard Manuel, who takes lead vocals on the track. There's a fierce groove to this rendition, with Manuel's live vocal inflections lending fresh resonance to the lyrics.

2 *DOWN SOUTH IN NEW ORLEANS*
(Johnnie Wright, Jack Anglin, Jim Anglin)
Bobby Charles pioneered what has been loosely defined as swamp rock, and penned the timeless *See You Later, Alligator* and *Walking To New Orleans*. Charles had arrived in Woodstock in early 1971 and was embraced by the awestruck members of The Band. His appearance – which was excluded from Scorsese's film – is shambolic yet spirited.

3 *OPHELIA*
(Robbie Robertson)
Garth Hudson's inspired horn arrangement propels this upbeat, effusive track. Levon Helm takes lead vocal and his soulful, gravelly tones bring an authentic feel.

4 *TURA LURA LURAL (THAT'S AN IRISH LULLABY)*
(James Royce Shannon)
Richard Manuel and Van Morrison share vocal duties on this wonderfully loose but emotive cover of composer James Royce Shannon's classic Irish-American song, written in 1913.

5 *CARAVAN*
(Van Morrison)
Dressed in what is best described as a maroon trapeze outfit, Van Morrison leads The Band into *Caravan*, from his 1970 album *Moondance*, with The Band pushing the tempo but Levon Helm pulling it back early to its perfect pace.

Side Five

1 *LIFE IS A CARNIVAL*
(Rick Danko, Levon Helm, Robbie Robertson)
Allen Toussaint's horn arrangement bolsters a fearsome groove created by Danko, Robertson, Manuel, Hudson and Helm.

2 *BABY, LET ME FOLLOW YOU DOWN*
(Reverend Gary Davis, Eric Von Schmidt)
Despite Bob Dylan's minimal rehearsal and the initial fear that he'd not sanction footage of his performance appearing in the film, he and The Band reconnect with impressive energy and pace, tearing into this song and *I Don't Believe You*…from their infamous 1966 electric tour..

3 *I DON'T BELIEVE YOU…*
(Bob Dylan)
Sporting white trilby and sunburst Fender Strat, Dylan lurches into this track from his fourth studio album *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*. It's another number left on the cutting floor by Scorsese, but which mercifully made the album.

4 *FOREVER YOUNG*
(Bob Dylan)
A defining moment, as Dylan and The Band bring fresh poignancy and grace to this song from his 1974 album *Planet Waves*. A storming rendition with an impassioned vocal from Dylan, this is an anthemic performance and a wholly appropriate sentiment for the evening.

5 *BABY, LET ME FOLLOW YOU DOWN (REPRISE)*
(Reverend Gary Davis, Eric Von Schmidt)
Dylan and The Band bring the set full circle, ripping back into a reprise of *Baby, Let Me Follow You Down* before closing, with Robertson asking Dylan to remain onstage to lead the grand finale…

6 *I SHALL BE RELEASED*
(Bob Dylan)
According to Levon Helm, the camera crews were due to wrap up at an agreed time when promoter and owner of the Winterland Ballroom Bill Graham yelled: "Fuck you! Roll the cameras, roll 'em." Robbie Robertson recalled: "Everybody came out and gathered around the mics. Ringo sat at our second drum kit. Ronnie Wood strapped on my other guitar. Bob took the first verse, and everybody came in on the chorus. As glorious as the moment was, there was a melancholy to all those voices that ran right through me, especially when Richard came in, singing the last verse in falsetto with Bob. The song took on another meaning in regard to this 'last waltz'."

Side Six

1 *THE WELL*
(Robbie Robertson)
Side Six – entitled *The Last Waltz Suite* – was recorded at a later date. The lengthy gestation period of Scorsese's film gave Robertson time to create additional material for the album, some of which came to be known as *The Last Waltz Suite*. *The Well* was a showcase for the lost talent of Richard Manuel and here, he reconnects once more with his vocal muse.

2 *EVANGELINE*
(Robbie Robertson)
The Band's instrument-swapping abilities are in full evidence on this track, which finds Danko on mournful fiddle, Helm on mandolin, Hudson adding sombre tones on accordion and Manuel holding it all down behind the kit. Emmylou Harris's sublimely warm, lonesome tones evoke the tale of Evangeline, watching from a river ridge as The Mississippi Queen sinks to the bottom and disappears, with her gambler lover on board.

3 *OUT OF THE BLUE*
(Robbie Robertson)
A potent, heartfelt song from Robbie Robertson and one of just three songs on which he took lead vocals with The Band. His voice is not strong, but the fragility on display on this waltz-time track only heightens the emotion in the lyrical narrative.

4 *THE WEIGHT*
(Robbie Robertson)
This version of The Band's signature anthem alone provides newcomers with reason enough for listening to the album. Levon Helm's deeply soulful vocal graces the first verse and chorus before Mavis Staples brings a whole new dimension to the track with her gospel-fuelled vocal on the second verse. Roebuck 'Pops' Staples brings the sweetest soulful vocals to the third verse while the edgy urgency of Rick Danko graces verse four.

5 *THE LAST WALTZ REFRAIN*
(Robbie Robertson)
Richard Manuel's rich vocals grace this lush composition, which runs at just 1:28 long.

6 *THEME FROM THE LAST WALTZ*
(Robbie Robertson)
And so the lavish triple album ends where it began, the same composition albeit with lush strings and horns. Musical director, producer and long-term friend John Simon arranged the horns and strings, with the resulting instrumental evoking a sense of forlorn resolution.

Getty

again/ In the winter of '65/ We were hungry, just barely alive…". It was their masterpiece. The Band set their songs in a rich, mythical past, creating timeless music and forming the bedrock of what is now known as Americana.

The Band took to the road and were a compelling live act, but by 1970, Manuel, Danko and Helm had succumbed to drug and alcohol excesses. Manuel's songwriting suffered, leaving Robertson to take on all duties for 1970's *Stage Fright*. The albums *Cahoots* (1971), *Rock Of Ages* (1972) and *Northern Lights – Southern Cross* (1975) followed. But by the mid 1970s, The Band were falling apart.

A move west to the beaches of southern California had proved calamitous.

The all-star cast convenes for the finale rendition of *I Shall Be Released*

"People tell me all the time they love The Last Waltz… I refrain from telling them that for me, it was a real scandal"
LEVON HELM

Getty

Blues statesman Muddy Waters and Robbie Robertson performing *Mannish Boy*

Temptations abounded and the more the band toured, the worse their personal problems became. Manuel attempted suicide on several occasions. "I had started to contemplate the idea that we might need to get off the road before something really bad happened," Robertson wrote in *Testimony*. "Somewhere along the way, we had lost our unity and our passion to reach higher. Self-destructive had become the power that ruled us."

Robertson saw *The Last Waltz* as his way out of this morass. He had grown to loathe touring and had his sights set on a career as a film-soundtrack producer and composer. Unfortunately for him, the rest of the band were not as keen on the idea of a final, farewell concert.

Levon Helm's objection, in particular, stemmed from the fact that Robertson had the lion's share of songwriting royalties, despite Helm's conviction that many songs had been written collaboratively with the band. Robertson consequently had no financial need to tour, but Helm, Danko, Manuel and Hudson certainly did.

There was another problem. A late addition to the star-studded roster at the Winterland concert was Neil Diamond, a decision that left Helm apoplectic with rage. Robinson had produced Diamond's album and argued that his inclusion was a tribute to the Brill building songwriting legacy. But Helm believed the presence of such a showbiz icon was wholly at odds with everything The Band stood for. Helm allegedly never forgave Robbie Robertson for this action and despised *The Last Waltz*.

"Today, people tell me all the time they love *The Last Waltz*," Helm wrote in his 1993 autobiography *This Wheel's On Fire*. "I try to thank them politely and usually refrain from mentioning that, for me, it was a real scandal."

ONE LAST STAND

Despite the disagreements, The Band did all commit to *The Last Waltz* album and film. "I talked with Levon, Garth, Richard and Rick individually about this experiment we were embarking on," said Robertson in *Testimony*. "None of us truly understood where we were headed, but we knew change was inevitable. Levon said, in a quiet, brotherly tone: 'Maybe if we can have one last stand, it will give us a good look at tomorrow. I'm ready to give it my best shot, so you can damn well count on me.'"

Rehearsals began in earnest at Shangri-La, The Band's studio and 'clubhouse', which was situated off the Pacific Coast Highway, across from their Zuma Beach base in California. Joni Mitchell, Neil Young and Bob Dylan all attended these rehearsals, while Van Morrison and Eric Clapton ran through their material in San Francisco, days before the event.

On the day of the concert, the Winterland Ballroom had never looked grander. An elaborately designed lighting system included three giant onstage chandeliers and a set borrowed from the San Francisco Opera's production of *La Traviata* created a warm, homey atmosphere. The 5,000 invited audience members were treated to a lavish Thanksgiving Day banquet and ballroom dancing to orchestral accompaniment.

Anticipation was high. Scorsese was backstage looking anxious but ready, Robbie Robertson recalled in his autobiography, while in the dressing room, The Band were in a huddle. Robertson remembered their spirits soaring, but with a "focused calmness"; Danko looking "pumped – ready and raring"; Richard Manuel held out a hand to show he wasn't shaking too badly, and Helm reminded Robertson to look over to him for certain breaks and endings in the set.

"Gentlemen, are we ready?" asked promoter Bill Graham before they stepped out on the stage in complete darkness. "When the cameras were rolling, I signalled Levon, and he said over his mic through the darkness, 'Good evening,'" recalled Robertson. "The crowd erupted, and we kicked into *Up On Cripple Creek*. The lights came up – warm, natural and cinematic, nothing like a regular rock show. The sound on the stage felt powerful and clear. Levon's vocal was strong and authentic. I looked over at Rick and Richard, and they were both in the zone. This was it…"

Four decades on from its release, it's easy to lionise *The Last Waltz* as a peerless work, but it's not. Some of the performances are lacklustre, and the various sonic tweaks and edits have rendered any sense of audience participation obsolete. But as a document of The Band at their finest, it enthralls.

Despite the roll call of household names who stepped up to the mic that Thanksgiving Day back in 1976, it's the performances by The Band themselves that really stand the test of time. Here was a group like no other, writing songs that were timeless before their albums even hit the shelves. *The Last Waltz* captured the essence of what made them great. As journalist Jack Hamilton observed, writing in *The Atlantic* magazine in 2012: "They wrote songs so great they sounded like they'd existed for centuries. But they played them in ways that no one had played songs before." ●

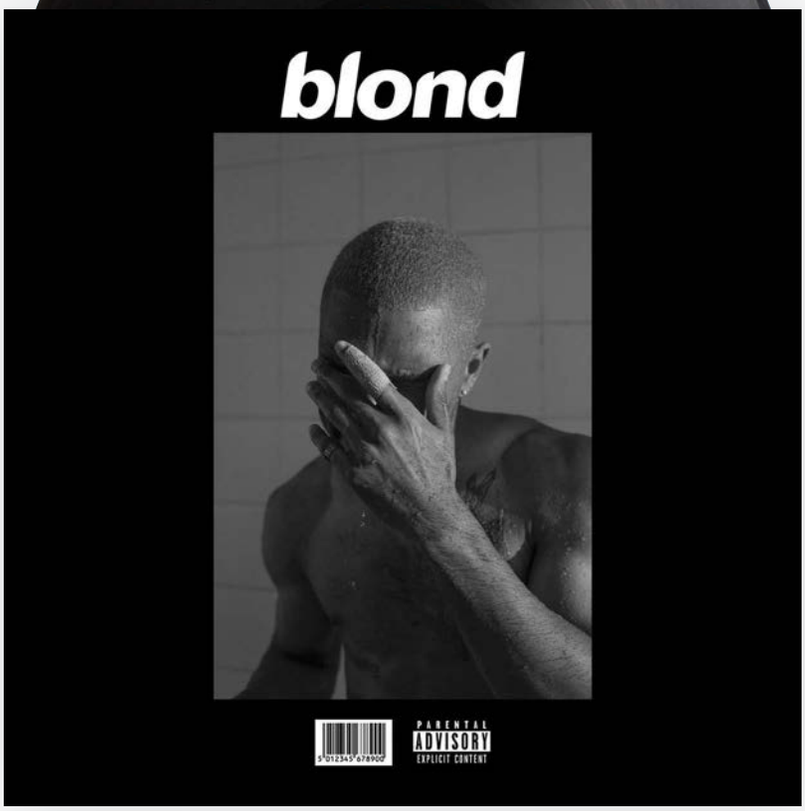
Getty

Neil Young plays harmonica, backing up fellow Canadian Joni Mitchell

"Levon's vocal was strong… I looked over at Rick and Richard, and they were both in the zone. This was it"

ROBBIE ROBERTSON

Choice Cuts #10



FRANK OCEAN
BLOND
2LP BLACK VINYL

Frank Ocean's 1,000-limited run of his modern R&B classic, *Blond*, is a dream find for record collectors and a rewarding listen to boot…

WAX FACTS
Frank Ocean
Blond
Label **Self-released**
Year **2016**
Format **2LP black vinyl**

£300+

Rarely do albums become worth 10 times their retail price within a matter of days, but such was the case with Frank Ocean's 2016 release *Blond*. Also styled as *Blonde*, it was the songwriter's first album since *Channel Orange* in 2012. After the digital release alone, the album was attracting significant attention, and it became one of the most critically acclaimed releases of the year. Ocean used it to explore his sense of romance and confusion, while often remaining ambiguous and introverted. *Blond* is left open to interpretation for the most part, and is musically dense, with an intoxicating vibe that weaves in and out of every track – and the subtle hooks and melodies given enough space to breathe. It's unlike anything else released in 2016.

Blond's physical release came three months later, on RSD Black Friday. It had already been bootlegged, with several poor-quality coloured pressings, but the authentic pressing was manufactured to stand out. It was a one-time run of 1,000 copies on double black vinyl, with a black and white sleeve as opposed to the full-colour image used on the digital release.

Naturally, the album sold out within minutes of going on sale exclusively through Ocean's website, and copies appeared online for extortionate prices, within minutes. Two years on, the price has stabilised somewhat, but you'd be hard pushed to find a sealed copy for less than £300. It's a modern collector's item that will only grow in value and is one of the most important R&B releases of the last few years.
Glen Bushell

18+

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COVER STAR

CRAIG BRAUN

THE BRAUN LEGACY

He worked with Warhol, Hendrix and Zeppelin, created the famous Velvet Underground banana sleeve and co-designed The Rolling Stones' tongue and lips logo. **Teri Saccone** meets Craig Braun in New York to discuss a seismic career…

Craig Braun is a singular artist, who helped transform the album sleeve from humble vinyl vessel to an interactive experience. Neither purely a graphic designer nor artist, but a self-described "unique packager", he revolutionised album covers with innovation and subversion. His concepts and designs were not merely two-dimensional pieces of art: they *did* something. Braun both radicalised sleeves and co-designed the most recognisable logo in rock 'n' roll history. It's immediately apparent that Braun is devoid of the egotistical trappings one might anticipate from an industry titan; he's warm, laid back and funny. It's also easy to envision that, back in the day, he was the 'smartest guy in the room', redolent of Don Draper, fictional protagonist of *Mad Men* – although Braun is far hipper (Jimi Hendrix solicited *him* for drugs).

Braun grew up in Chicago and, after university, went into the print industry in New York in 1964. "I created a gimmick, which was a self-adhesive label on albums emblazoned with 'includes the hit single'," he says. "The first was for an Elvis album, so if you had this sticker on the upper third of an LP's shrinkwrap, it sold a lot more albums. I took it to every record company and started my own business as a broker.

"We expanded into merchandising; point-of-sale displays, self-shipper counter units for the stores, banners, mobiles, etc. I hired a team of designers and illustrators to do the artwork. In the mid 60s, I got a call from the production manager of London Records/USA to do a cover, and although I didn't have a background in album design, without hesitation, I said 'Yes' before I even knew what to do. I learnt fast, by going to mass merchandisers like Sears and Mom+Pop record shops.

"I saw there was an opportunity to take the conventional format of a 12"x12" album way beyond the ordinary. I formed a new company with two partners in Chicago – Album Graphics (AGI). I set up a West Coast studio and, soon, we were creating and manufacturing unique album packaging with most major labels, along with the independents: Chess, Motown, Shelter, A&M and Mercury Records. That early partnership of ours didn't work out, so I broke away and set up my own Sound Packaging Division."

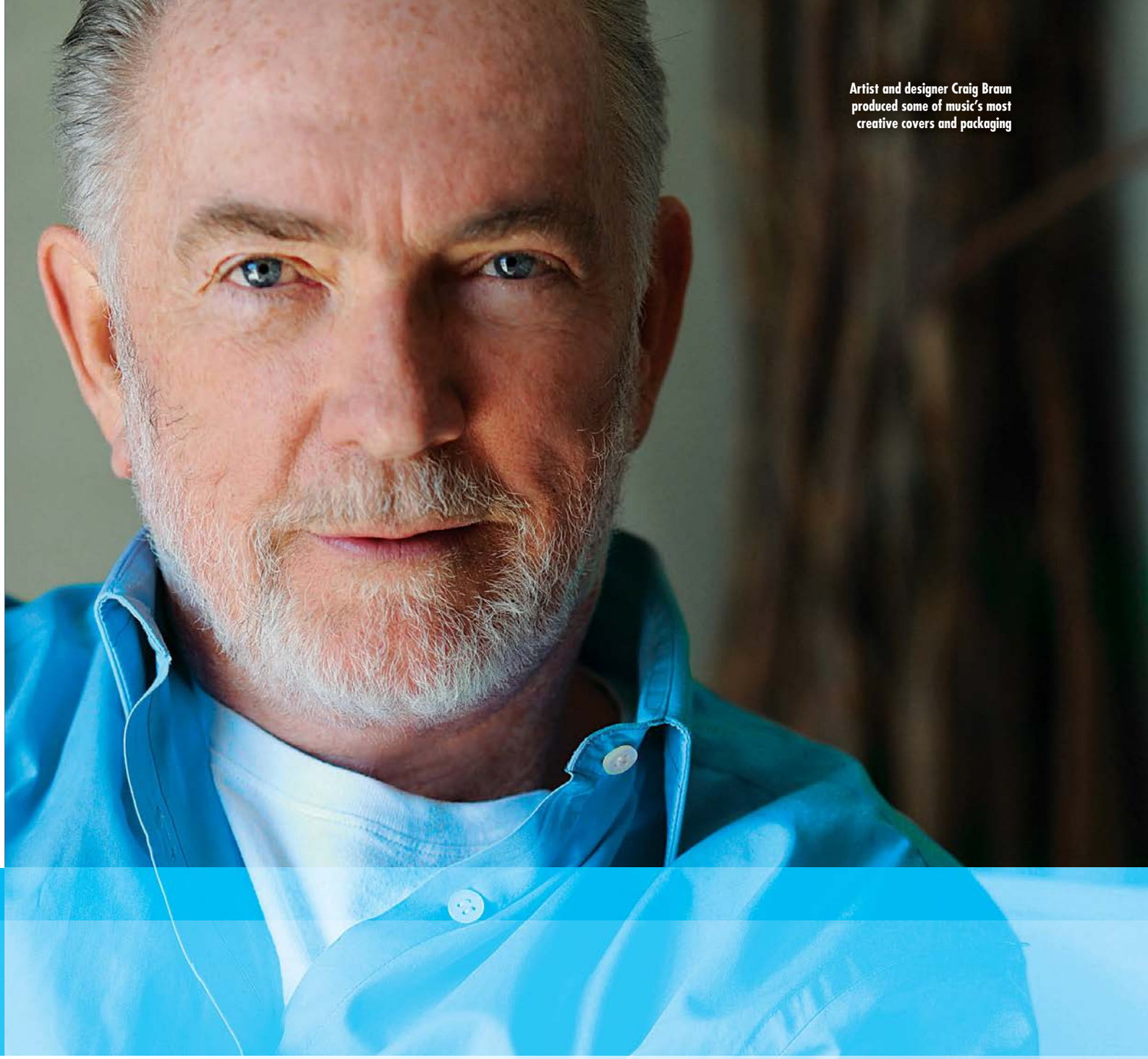
As Braun's career ascended, so did 60s youth culture. "London was on fire musically, fashion-wise, everything," he remembers. "The world was changing and there was a real sense of freedom. If you were creative, you could express it in many forms; we could break down barriers and it was really fun, rebellious. The prior generation of parents never encouraged that. 'Fucking uptight', was how we described the voices of middle America."

> "I SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE CONVENTIONAL 12"X12" ALBUM FORMAT WAY BEYOND THE ORDINARY"
>
> **CRAIG BRAUN**

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Braun's landmark collaboration with Andy Warhol on *The Velvet Underground & Nico* was notorious for its phallic-symbolic banana cover (painted by Warhol). Braun remembers creating the design: "Andy wanted to take that banana painting and put it on a cover for the first Velvets album, but didn't know how to best accomplish that, so I was quickly recruited by MGM Records. I developed a special pre-coated label stock with removable adhesive, so when the banana was 'peeled', the shocking-pink fruit was revealed! Andy and I became good friends, fast."

Remembering another key moment in the history of sleeve art, Braun continues: "One night at a New York nightclub with Jagger and Warhol, Andy suggested that Mick put a zipper on a sleeve, planting that seed." Marshall Chess, a lifelong friend of Braun's from Chicago, was now running the nascent



Artist and designer Craig Braun produced some of music's most creative covers and packaging

Rolling Stones Records: "So I started to put together mock-ups with zippers on them and loved the idea of a triptych folding it all out to full size. But we settled on just doing the front of the jeans on the cover. I got the concept mock-up approved by Chess and Atlantic Records. I'd devised many different ideas, but Mick wanted the zipper. Although I knew it would be problematic getting a zipper on the cover, this album-cover construction and zipper application gave me a leg-up for my Sound Packaging Division to get the production of the entire album!

"I went to Talon Zippers and said I needed a couple of million small custom-made zippers. I told them I needed them for free, as they would be on the next Stones album. But suffice it to say, there were lots of negotiations with the Ertegun Brothers [Atlantic Records' founders].

"It was a challenging production and I needed the time to set up the assembly lines: making the packaging, hand-gluing those two fabric pieces on the sides of the zippers and making corrugated inserts and stacking them like shirts in a Chinese laundry. This was a complicated deal, in every respect."

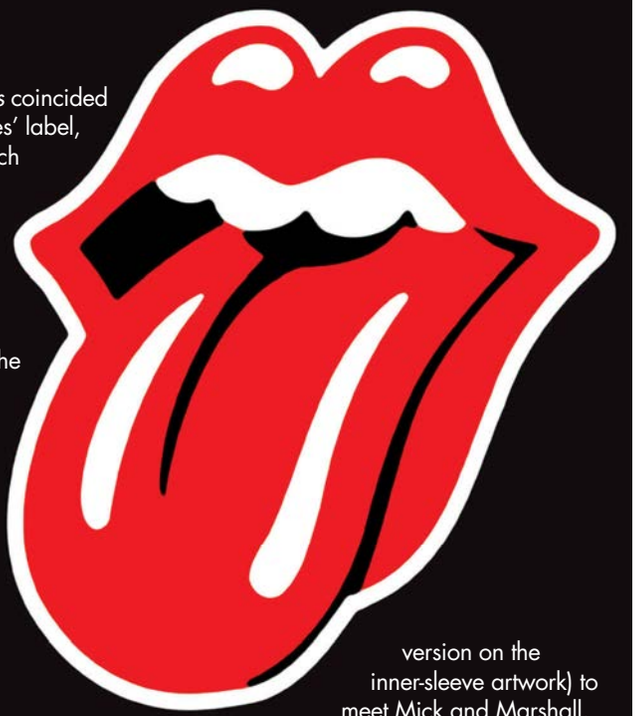
ZIPPERS TO ZEPPELINS

Sticky Fingers coincided with the launch of the aforementioned Stones' new label, which necessitated a striking logo. It was conceived in part by London art student John Pasche, then developed and refined by Braun. As his album sleeves are provocative and contemporaneous of the era, so was the hedonism: sex, drugs and decadence in all its forms were endemic to those days. Braun indulged vigorously, and the hedonism fuelled his designs. One example is Cheech & Chong's *Big Bambú*, a giant cigarette paper packet (with actual papers) was conceived effortlessly. "That quickly came to me, because I got high a lot and used Big Bambú papers. I had a pack on my desk and one day thought, 'Why can't this be an album cover?'.

"My real contribution during that period was that an album didn't have to be inside a normal package, although I also designed conventional covers, such as the posthumous Hendrix ones, *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning*, which stand out graphically, but the unique,

DESIGNING 'THAT' LOGO

The release of *Sticky Fingers* coincided with the launch of The Stones' label, Rolling Stones Records, which needed a logo. Conceived by art student John Pasche along with input from Jagger, Braun developed the original idea. "Marshall Chess was in London with Mick and Pasche working on the logo," recalls Craig. "Since it was a handmade album sleeve, I needed the logo done, so I got them to send me the basic 'lips and tongue' rough idea. It was based on images of The Goddess Kali Ma… suggested by Mick and Keith. With Mick and Pasche working on the unfinished logo, I needed the logo done for it to be included on *Sticky Fingers*, so I got Marshall to send me the basic rough sketch, which was simply a black rubber stamp. Then I got my artists to blow up that silhouette using the original idea as a starting place and we went from there, refining it. I then sent one of my account guys over to London with the final *Sticky Fingers* mechanical artwork (including my lips- and-tongue version on the inner-sleeve artwork) to meet Mick and Marshall, who both approved it the next day… Pasche hadn't finished his logo, so I told them to use his on the WEA English album. Ultimately, it ended up being my version, not his, they use everywhere. They use mine for the tours, merchandising, licensing. Ironically, the V&A Museum paid Pasche almost £100,000 for his original logo art, but it's not the official Stones version."



"IN LIFE, THERE'S ALWAYS RABBIT SHIT MIXED IN WITH THE JELLY BEANS"

CRAIG BRAUN

concept covers that actually did stuff were my signature."

Because Braun's sleeves required various accoutrements, but at extra cost, label executives could be wary of him: "Whenever a band would tell their label they wanted me as the designer, the labels would respond with, 'Oh no! Braun always does expensive covers that he insists on producing,' because I'd always adversely affect their budgets. I would tell the band managers and producers I needed a minimum quantity of a half million, as I had to be competitive with conventional packaging budgets. So startup acts were out of the question."

However, legendary manager Peter Grant sought out Braun for input on the *Led Zeppelin III* sleeve. Braun worked with London designer Zacron, but takes minimal credit – for the construction, the wheel and eyeletting, and manufacturing the sleeve. It's notable that Braun had both the creative process and business acumen down to an artform. "My business model was simple: I didn't want to get £2,000 for all the artwork for an album, or any of the marketing and promotional materials. Instead, I gave away the design, but I manufactured everything that I designed with my staff. In a sense, for our contribution, we got royalties, just like the act.

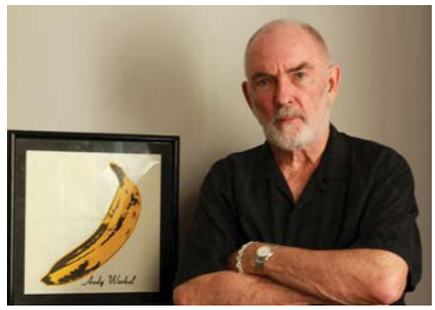
"The Stones didn't pay me a nickel for the design of the *Sticky*… jacket, or the logo. I got the licensing of that logo through my Rockreations division for a period of three years with the Stones' Musidor N.V., and made keyrings, jewellery, belt buckles, badges, watches, canvas bags… all with my 'Licks' version of the 'tongue and lips' logo." The logo licensing reverted back to The Stones and, as they say, the rest is history… after several decades and a billion-dollar licensing/merchandising venture.

Braun with close friend Alfie Wade

In the late 80s, as the music industry grew increasingly corporate, Braun was recruited as head of marketing for three of the world's biggest labels: Warner, Elektra and Atlantic. "I was involved with the packaging, advertising and promotion for WEA," he says. "But they really wanted me for my special packaging prowess for limited-edition CDs, boxsets… I see this phase of my career as a totally separate iteration from the first half, when I was younger, and focused solely on the creative challenges and fun of having my own company."

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

Braun is an engaging raconteur and our conversation covers all manner of diverse topics. He recounts tales about his former jetset lifestyle and how he burnt through much of his well-earned fortune (mostly via substances or "better living through chemistry", as he puts it). He tells us how he had a private French cook, superstar friends and colleagues and about his ownership of a fleet of rare Porsches stored in his Manhattan carriage house. He embodies rock's bygone heyday, yet remains relevant not because of his past, but because of his reinvention as a trained actor working for two decades across film, TV and theatre. He wholly embraces the inherent challenges of that world, and retains his innate humour when pondering the vicissitudes of a charmed-but-flawed life thus far. "It was all worth it," he reflects on the highs and lows. "In life, there's always rabbit shit mixed in with the jelly beans."



CLASSIC COVERS

CRAIG BRAUN

STICKY FINGERS
THE ROLLING STONES
(1971)

"I realised the vinyl needed an additional panel to fold under the front, to protect the vinyl from the back of the zipper. The pull at the top of the zipper we shipped to the pressing plants was damaging [the record]," Craig explains. "All of the records were coming back, investment was huge; the loss would be enormous. I stayed up all night brainstorming a solution: we had to get them to pull the zippers down slightly so as not to damage the vinyl, which worked."

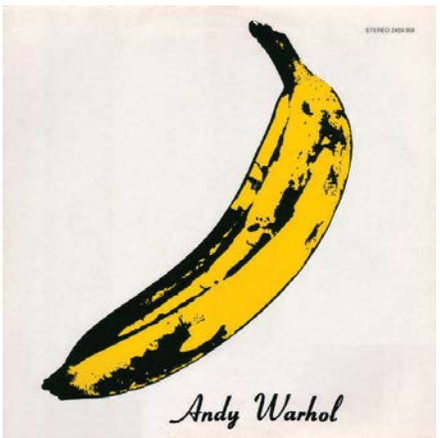
SCHOOL'S OUT
ALICE COOPER
(1972)

"I think this caught people off guard, as it opens into a real desk with legs, inkwell, pencil grooves, etc," says Craig. "I carved initials and stuff in the wood of an antique desk I had someone source in downtown NYC and then my staff put boogers and chewing gum on there. Then I wrapped the record in a pair of women's panties over the vinyl. A woman gave me a pair of her undies, so I thought they might look great wrapped around the vinyl: the album 'wearing' panties."

BIG BAMBÚ
CHEECH & CHONG
(1972)

In its full-sized glory, with giant rolling-paper inserts, this is another masterpiece. "When I put the comp together, originally it was for The Stones," recalls Craig. "But Cheech & Chong's first album sold two-and-a-half million copies and this was their follow-up. So I went to Lou Adler and said, 'I've got an idea that will sell this without a record in it, because the kids will want this package. We had to create special dye-cutting and glueing… The laughs were minimal on that album, but the sleeve worked out pretty great."

CRAIG BRAUN

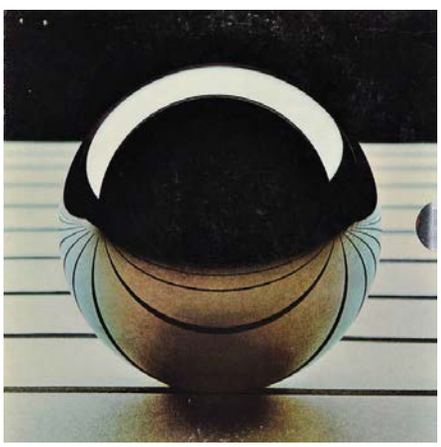


THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO
THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
(1967)

"Andy wanted the meat of the banana on the album with the skin over the top and nobody did pressure-sensitive labels like that," says Craig. "I found a label-stock company who could make a removable pressure-sensitive adhesive/reappliable skin that would allow it to be peeled back, then reapplied. I said, 'Let's leave the cover white with just the banana stamp on it'. I made it look like a silk screen, which was Andy's thing."

E PLURIBUS FUNK
GRAND FUNK RAILROAD
(1971)

"This was a pain, due to their manager, Terry Knight," remembers Craig. "He was a marketing genius, but a huge pain in the ass. It's an incredible, round package. For that silver-coin overlay, I had a coin guy do this, as I wanted it done in proper numismatic dimensions. It's all embossed in relief, too."



TOMMY: AS PERFORMED BY THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHAMBER CHOIR
THE WHO
(1972)

"This was *Tommy*, performed as a real opera," says Craig. "This sleeve is special to me, as I created it with my dear friend and colleague, album designer Tom Wilkes. We joined forces (becoming Wilkes & Braun). We had illustrations of the guest musicians. We did a complete package for this and a libretto, and that's my favourite package of all. We won Best Album Package at the Grammys in 1974 for this."

BARRY WHITE
STONE GON'
(1973)

"I suggested we do a giant 'love' greeting card for this and Barry loved the idea," Craig recalls. "I hired Norman Seeff, the very talented South African photographer. We rented the *2001: Space…* set from MGM, rented a white grand piano and we did the shoot. He wanted his girlfriend in the picture… I replied, 'We want to sell this album to women'. My compromise was to include a bit of her arm and hand resting on the piano! It took two months to get him to write the love poem inside the card." ●

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MILES DAVIS
BREAK

STOP THE CLOCKS

CLOCKTOWER MUSIC, BRIDPORT

Bridport's Clocktower Music is one of the south coast's quirkiest and most welcoming spots to hunt for vinyl. **Laura Williams** pops in, makes herself a cup of tea and finds out more…

Take a stroll down a hidden alleyway off one of the main streets in the Dorset market town of Bridport and you might just stumble upon this 'hidden gem' (as attested to by a million tourists). Walking into Clocktower Music, you're met with a warm welcome and a sensory explosion.

Looking a bit like a retro US warehouse, Clocktower is home not only to crates and crates of pre-loved records of all genres, but also shelves full of kitsch – including a jukebox, pinball machine and vintage listening post… its roots as an antiques shop may have a lot to answer for there. Now run by Roy Gregory and a team of staff and volunteers, the shop retains elements of its former self with a range of Bluetooth-enabled vintage radios, sold only in the shop, for around £100 a pop.

Clocktower, which opened in its current guise in 2016, began life as a market stall before migrating to its versatile premises in the town's art and vintage quarter. Founder Roy, who is originally from Merseyside, tells us how it all began. "I had quite a big record collection," he says. "So I took a market stall to start selling my records and it went really well."

When the local town surveyor was looking to theme the market, Roy suggested records – an idea that initially met with a stony silence. "It was 2007, 2008 and records weren't that much of a thing; nobody really thought it was a good idea and I said: 'Well, I seem to be doing alright on the market stall and people are bringing ones to buy,' so they agreed and I went round and I organised all the charity shops to collect records for this day."

The first Bridport record fair took place in the Electric Palace venue and the Ropemakers pub, featuring around 25 stall holders, before expanding into a regular market with support from the local council. Roy says: "I went to see the surveyor and said, 'Can you help us?', and they said: 'Will it help tourism?' and I said, 'Yes' – so they gave us £100 towards advertising, which was really cool for a town council to help us like that. People came from London and Bristol, because they probably thought it was a nice idea to come and have a holiday and do that."

A national music magazine dubbed the fair – which Roy named 'Vinyl Saturday' – the best in Europe, helping to attract record buyers from further afield. With the success of the quarterly markets, Roy started considering where to go next.

Speaking to *Long Live Vinyl* in the busy Bridport shop, he says: "One day, I came in here when it was an antiques shop and it was full of brown things, and there was a corner spare, so I asked Nigel, the owner, whether I could start putting some records in here, and it went well. Over time, Nigel was thinking of retiring and we ended up with quite a few of us doing stuff in here – there's a recording studio in the back and a rehearsal room – and the records kept going. There was another chap, Mark, who had a record shop in the back of the pet shop in town

> "PEOPLE CAME FROM LONDON AND BRISTOL, THEY PROBABLY THOUGHT IT WAS NICE TO COME AND HAVE A HOLIDAY AND SEE THE RECORD FAIR"
>
> **ROY GREGORY**

Pictures Andy Marsh

> BUYERS ARE GETTING YOUNGER. A LOT OF UNDER-30S DOWNLOAD MUSIC AND BUY VINYL, BUT THERE'S A MISSING GENERATION BETWEEN 1986 AND 2006
>
> **ROY GREGORY**

ROY TALKS VINTAGE VALVE RADIOS

"One of the novel ideas we've championed is adapting original vintage valve radios to work as a Bluetooth receiver, so you can hear the valve, analogue sound from many sources such as streaming, or by adding Bluetooth transmitters to CD players, record decks or cassette decks. The idea came a couple of years ago from the two radio engineers and hi-fi enthusiasts who restore or repair hi-fi and valve radios for customers of the shop, and they were looking at how to convert classic retro designs and equipment into a modern music-listening device and still use the original valves, amplifiers and speakers."

– very quirky, very Bridport. We all got together with a guy doing instruments and we started doing this. Someone I know has a printing press in his garden shed, meaning we can do T-shirts and print onto vinyl. Nigel sold all the antiques… the rest is history."

Tourism is very important to Clocktower and Bridport as a whole, a small West Dorset town which has many independent shops, cafés and a strong local arts scene, but isn't necessarily on everyone's radar. Roy has estimated that 80% of customers are tourists or visitors, with the remainder being residents of the 12,000-population town. He says: "Our main challenge is getting people through the door. Once they do that, most will come back. Even though we're only a few minutes from the High Street, our rents are a lot lower and we've also got parking, but we have to spend almost as much on advertising as rent to be found. That said, all the floors upstairs are artists and designers. You've got guys at the back who make waxworks for Madame Tussauds and artists and potters. It's quite a vibrant area and because it's so different, it brings in lots of different people."

While the shop attracts a lot of predominantly men of a similar age to Roy and his team (there are at least a dozen people browsing on the wintry Thursday when we visit), there's been a significant increase in teenage girls buying cassettes to play on second-hand Sony Walkmans, or old music magazines. He adds: "Buyers are getting younger. A lot of under-30s download music and buy vinyl, but there's almost a missing generation between 1986-2006.

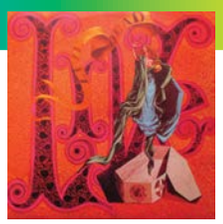
"While it's mostly vinyl," he continues, "we've tried to make it interesting and we've done a few things which are about

ROY'S TOP 5

The Clocktower Music owner's favourite in-store selections

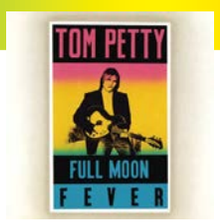
1. LOVE
FOREVER CHANGES

"One of the first LPs I bought, the mix of observational lyrics and folk psych still seems relevant."



2. GRATEFUL DEAD
LIVE/DEAD

"I was fortunate to see the Dead's first UK appearance and see them play *Dark Star* on my birthday. Still takes my mind elsewhere."



3. TOM PETTY
FULL MOON FEVER

"I could probably have chosen most of Tom's albums, his lyrics and tunes just seem to totally relate to how I feel."

4. BOB DYLAN
BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

"Dylan offers shelter from the storm. For the times, it is needed."

5. ELVIS COSTELLO
MY AIM IS TRUE

"The mix of styles, from aggression to smart punk to pop, coupled with how to get noticed, still works for me."

attracting people to come and browse. So much is driven by the net these days, it's good to just come and get stuck in."

Clocktower's huge album selection is catalogued in alphabetical order from A to Z, while the 7"s are sorted into record-label order, rather than alphabetical. "You've got all your Atlantics together," says Roy. "You've got all your Decca, so we do little things like that which make it different."

MAGIC TOYSHOP

"All around the shop there's all sorts of quirky stuff," Roy adds. "Including the pinball machine and jukebox, things like that. We try to give everyone who comes in the opportunity to listen to music how they want, with three listening booths for vinyl and cassettes, and we can play stuff back through the old radios, too. We do lots of things to catch people's attention, like the vintage radios – we've Bluetoothed them so you can play Spotify and iTunes through them."

Unlike a lot of other record shops, Clocktower very rarely sells anything online. It means you have to go and experience the shop in order to grab your bargain, but it is well worth the trek. The team work hard to create a community around the shop and make everyone feel welcome. There's free Wi-Fi, sofas – even free tea and coffee, although you'll have to make it yourself! What's more, the shop's toilets have been named the best in any record shop in the UK. Quite an accolade.

There are other draws, too, with the whole team throwing ideas into the mix. Roy runs us through a popular addition to the shop: "When you've got a second-hand record shop, you do get a fair number of records where the records are shattered or the sleeves are gone, and so lots of shops end up with shelves of albums and sleeves hoping one day to match them, but they never do. So we always have a sale section, but we started having containers of iconic ▶

TOP OF THE SHOP

Roy shares an eclectic selection of his customers' favourite records…

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS
LOVELY CREATURES

WIRE
CHAIRS MISSING

FLEETWOOD MAC
RUMOURS

HARVEY MANDEL
CRISTO REDENTOR

THE MIKE WESTBROOK CONCERT BAND
CELEBRATION

sleeves, which we sell for £1 to £5. Most of us try to get good condition – not only the vinyl, but the sleeve, too – so the opportunity to upgrade a sleeve is great."

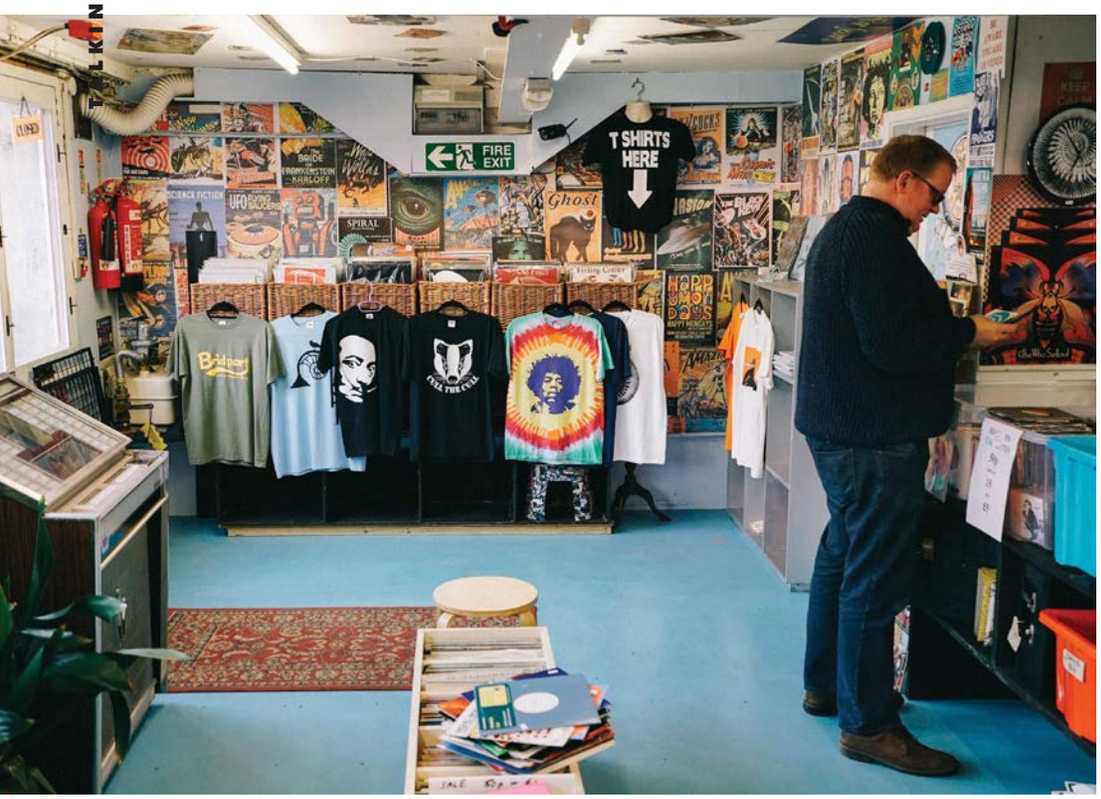
Opening from Wednesdays to Sundays allows Roy (who was technically retired from the financial services industry when he got himself into the Clocktower venture) a couple of days off a week. It also means the shop is busier on the days it is open.

GONE IN A FLASH

Flash sales are another Clocktower trick to attract custom. As he puts on a Nick Cave record at the request of a customer, Roy explains: "Every now and then, we do a three- or four-hour flash sale – so we've done one today on CDs, where between 11am and 4pm, there's a 50% discount on CDs. We just announce it on social media, very quickly, literally the day before and it gets people in.

"We tend to sell more during these sales… but this is so much fun, that's why we do it. It's the conversations. There was a lady who came in the other month who was the first person I've met who saw The Beatles at Shea Stadium.

> INCLUDING THE CHARITY SHOPS, THERE ARE ABOUT 15 PLACES TO BUY VINYL. ONE OF THE LABEL REPS SAID OUTSIDE OF THE BIG CITIES, BRIDPORT IS ONE OF THE HOTSPOTS FOR VINYL IN THE COUNTRY
>
> **ROY GREGORY**



"Living in Bridport, you've got Billy Bragg, PJ Harvey… and Bobby Gillespie from Primal Scream has got a holiday home down here, so you get those people coming in. You get other people, like the photographer that took the famous Bob Marley photograph lives locally, they've retired down here; you've got a guy who designed some of the Led Zeppelin covers now lives round here. It's not so much the musicians, but what you get a lot of down here is the engineers, the producers, the photographers, the people that work in the industry – so they always have quite interesting stories and they have quite good record collections."

Clocktower also plays host to live music from across the world. "The last one was a Japanese indie band who flew in on the Wednesday, did their album launch here on the Thursday, did a couple of radio shows on the Friday, then a gig Saturday and Sunday and flew back to Japan on the Monday.

"So the local paper had 'Japanese indie band launches album in Bridport'. Once you put a screen across and move all the chairs, you can get 40 to 50 people, and it was full. We had people watching in from the windows, too."

The shop also hosts gigs and records by local artists and has become an important part of the local arts scene – attracting visitors from across the world – but although there are over a dozen places you can pick up vinyl in Bridport, there is only one Clocktower Music.

In closing, Roy offers a few tips if you're tempted to have a dig next time you're in town: "We've got Bridport Music, another independent record shop. They do new vinyl, so we send people up there for that and they send people down here, too. We do hi-fi repairs, but we send people up there for the styluses. If anyone comes in with guitar stuff, we send them up there. It works really well.

"If you include all the charity shops, there are about 15 or 16 places you can find records in Bridport and, for the size of the town, that's incredible. One of the label reps said that outside of the big cities, Bridport is one of the hotspots for vinyl in the country." ●

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The Trip

Marseille

Next stop for **Mark Elliott** on his intrepid record-collecting travels is France's second city, Marseille – a multicultural port with a rich, varied cargo of vinyl in its stores…

We flew into the southern French city of Nice, the setting for Elton John's best moment on video – the seminal *I'm Still Standing*. Yet I had no idea how much the Rocket Man would dominate the selection I was soon to be faced with along the coast in France's second city, Marseille – Elton John records seemed to populate every rack I sifted through here. I later checked, back at the airport, and his career in France was solid by his own stellar standards, but there really was no good reason why just so many of his LPs and 45s would be circulating for sale. Perhaps on my next trip, it will all be Rod Stewart or Donna Summer – I'll let you know…

Marseille's one of those cities that really fires the imagination. Long since sullied by an unfair reputation that its social issues far outweigh its charms, I found it a fascinating blend of the surprising and spectacular, with its winding streets that date back centuries and a buzzing, multicultural vibe. Since its reign as the 2013 European Capital Of Culture, a fair bit of investment has been pumped into the place and, although its opera probably dominates its position on the cultural radar, there seems to be a vibrant rock and pop scene, too. In recent years, hip-hop has come to characterise the city's identity, with acts like La Fonky Family and Keny Arkana using it as their springboard.

There's a decent number of record fairs in Marseille across the year and I was sorry to miss one that was being supported by local radio station Soleil FM at the Espace Charles Trenet, the weekend after my visit. With its mild Mediterranean climate (although watch out for the wind; even on the sunniest of days, it can knock you off your feet) and famous sights such as the Notre-Dame de la Garde, this makes for an interesting couple of days, with the record shops just a few minutes' walk from the Old Port. The brocantes (vintage shops) dotted around the place yielded little here (unlike lots of places I have visited in France) and, in truth, are aimed mainly at the growing number of tourists, but it didn't stop me diving into most of them…

Marseille's one of those cities that really fires the imagination – and has a decent number of record fairs

Illustration Ben Talon

1 CASH N' CITY
86 Rue de Rome, 13006
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Saturday

2 O'CD
162 Rue de Rome, 13006
ocd.fr
Opening hours
10am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday

3 LOLLIPOP MUSIC
2 Boulevard Théodore Thurner, 13006
lollipopmusicstore.fr
Opening hours
2pm to 7pm Monday; 11am to 7pm Tuesday and Wednesday; 11am to 8pm Thursday to Saturday

4 FNAC
Centre Commercial Valentine, Route de la Sabliere, 13011
fnac.com
Opening hours
10am to 8pm Monday to Saturday; 10am to 7pm Sunday

5 EXTEND & PLAY VINYL
2 Place Notre Dame du Mont, 13006
extendandplay-records.com
Opening hours
1pm to 7.30pm Monday to Wednesday and Friday; 1pm to 9.30pm Thursday; noon to 8pm Saturday; noon to 6pm Sunday

6 TANGERINE
20 Rue des Trois Mages, 13006
Opening hours
11am to 7pm Monday to Saturday

7 SABRE TOOTH
19 Rue des Trois Mages, 13001
sabre-tooth.fr
Opening hours
1pm to 7pm Tuesday to Saturday

8 GALETTE RECORDS
31 Rue des Trois Rois, 13006
Opening hours
11am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday

1 CASH N' CITY

This national chain of Cash Express exchange stores – think Cash Converters for the French – surprisingly carries a fair bit of vinyl, but I have to say that my positive initial impressions don't last. It's the first shop I visit and while the haul looks potentially interesting, closer inspection reveals the inevitable: some badly scratched discs and a couple of sleeves that house a completely different record. It isn't a great start, but then the pricing is low and this chain doesn't claim to be any sort of vinyl specialist. That said, there really isn't any excuse for such sloppy stock management. I do pick up a copy of Elton John's 1981 album *The Fox*, with the interesting French track *J'Veux D'La Tendresse* (which replaced *Nobody Wins*) in decent nick, and the €6 I pay is very fair, but I'll approach this retailer with caution in future. Elton, as I mentioned in the introduction, is already starting to become a bit of a theme for this trip, but more on that later.

2 O'CD

This French chain can't compete with the dominance of Fnac, but does a very different job. Most of the stock here is second-hand and, although DVD and Blu-ray dominate, there's a decent range of vinyl in this Marseille branch. With 16 sites across the country at the time of going to press, this southern outpost throws up some interesting finds (stock is temptingly housed in lacquered wood units and filed precisely, which, as we all know, makes this sort of cratedigging more predictable, but so much easier). Elton John – him again – recorded his Michel Berger composition *Les Aveux* with one of this country's biggest stars, France Gall, in 1980. I've had the domestic 7" for years, but here I find a clean copy of the maxi-single for €6. It's a melodic piece of middle-era Elton that did reasonably well in this market. I also pick up 12" singles from other big domestic hits of the decade – Guesch Patti's *Etienne* and Caroline Loeb's *C'est La Ouate*. Quite why these flopped in the UK around the same time that Vanessa Paradis and Desireless cut through still puzzles me. A French-language edition of the *Popeye* soundtrack, with interesting reworks of material from the Robin Williams vehicle sets me back €10. *Il Est Large* (Track Three, Side One) just about sums it up and, although the Academy Awards ignored this effort, I found it hilarious as a 12-year-old. Suffice to say, it hasn't dated especially well. Another hero of the time, Shakin' Stevens, was pretty big news across parts of the continent then (although not especially in France). I find a variant of his *Give Me Your Heart Tonight* LP here, simply and snappily titled *Shakin' Stevens*. The tracks are largely the same, but the title and cover are different. This is the sort of find that makes these overseas jaunts worthwhile – although I appreciate Shaky doesn't get everyone trembling with excitement.

With 16 sites across the country at the time of going to press, this southern outpost throws up some interesting finds

❸ LOLLIPOP MUSIC

This Marseille institution plays a central part in the city's creative and counterculture scenes. The stock is balanced, but plays up to its left-of-centre reputation with plenty of rock, punk and psych to keep collectors coming back. There's a great live space and a regular programme of gigs largely supporting local, unsigned bands. There's an eclectic new-wave section that yields a copy of The Korgis' *Dumb Waiters* and The Flaming Mussolinis' *Watching The Film* for a very good deal and, in the bargain section, yet more Elton John, which I hoover up, as it's so fairly priced. No extra or replacement tracks in French on *Victim Of Love* or *Ice On Fire*, but nice clean copies nonetheless. Despite having a UK chart-topper with *Feels Like I'm In Love*, Kelly Marie was really a disco afterthought back in her homeland, but first broke through in France ahead of her UK success. As a disco/Hi-NRG collector, her gatefold Pye LP *Who's That Lady With My Man* is a real find for the handful of Euros I pay.

Pricing on the Dead Kennedys proves a touch keener. The store stocks a good amount of new vinyl, plus the usual range of T-shirts and books. Perhaps Lollipop's most interesting claim to fame is its label, with a scattering of rock 'n' roll, garage and punk releases. Some of it is playing in the adjacent branded café and it's a touch thrashy for my cappuccino habit, but the place is busy and even though my fantasy order for NikitA and a relaxed sit-down would be likely to fall on deaf ears, the service is generally charming. It's time to move on, but this is a must-visit.

4 FNAC

I've recently given a long-overdue shout-out to our entertainment-shopping stalwart HMV so, when in France, it seems entirely appropriate to offer the same sort of recommendation for Fnac, which I'm sure features on most like-minded collectors' visits to the UK's nearest continental cousin. The chain has done a decent job, like HMV, of navigating the modern retail era and, although CD shelves are shrinking, vinyl seems to expand on each trip here. Marseille's city-centre branch isn't the biggest I've been to, but stock is varied and certainly up to the brand's usual standard. In truth, there isn't much to find here that you can't find back home, but it's unlikely Celine Dion's collaborations with Jean-Jacques Goldman get much billing outside her core Francophile markets. The two LPs she recorded with the French star (in 1995 and 1998) are very different from the pop balladry you'll no doubt be more familiar with. 2003's *1 Fille & 4 Types* is edgier and is as close to an indie Celine as we're likely to see. I obviously already have CD copies, so the 180g vinyl reissues from last year are a welcome addition to my baggage allowance. Oh, and they have some Elton reissues on promotion, but I'm holding out for second-hand…

The Fnac chain has done a decent job of navigating the modern retail era and vinyl seems to expand on each trip

Top five

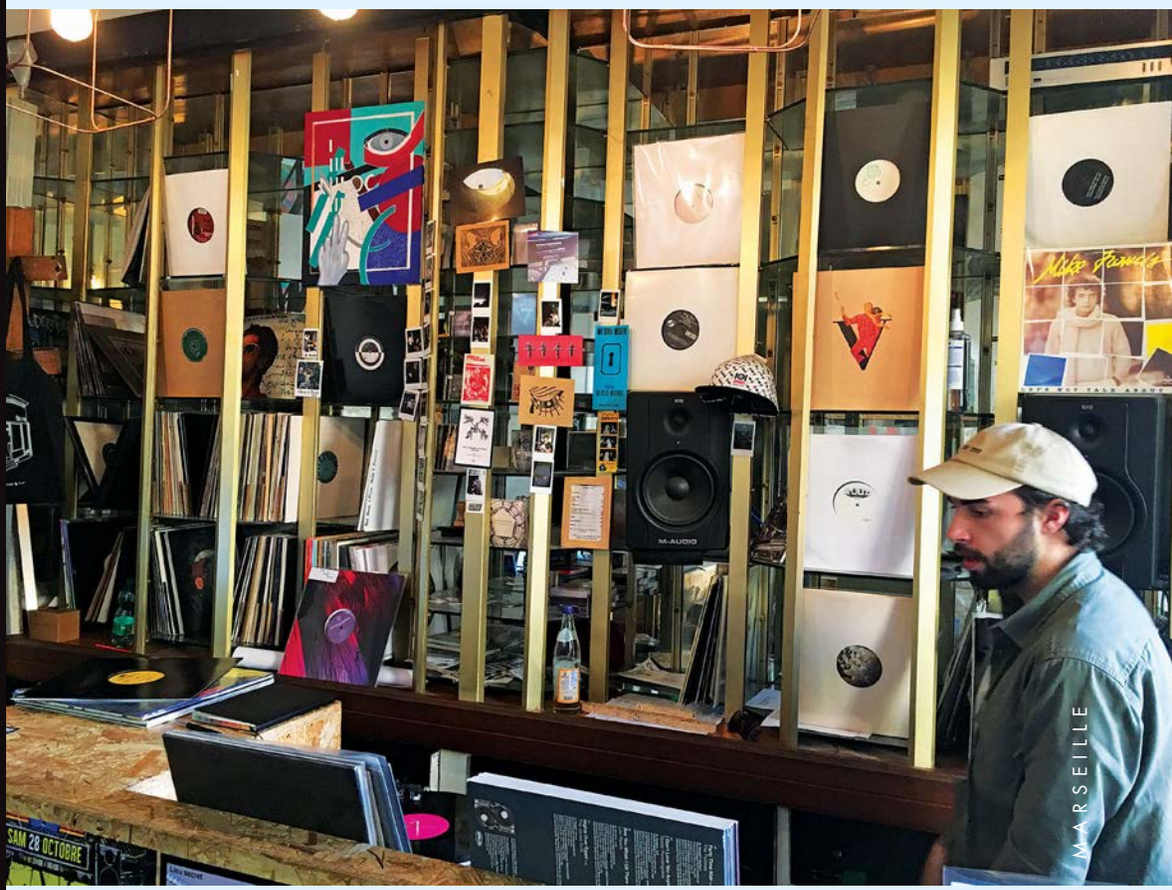
1 JOE LE TAXI
The city is built up on steep hills around the old port. Although distances between shops are short, the hills and an excessive amount of shopping might necessitate the odd cab (or at least it did for me). If you can work out the public-transport system, you're a braver soul than I am – but, in truth, there is plenty of it.

2 DIRTY CASH
You'll need a fair bit of cash in these shops, as only a handful accept credit or debit cards. I found I got better prices, too, if I offered up my Euros. Hope you're all hoarding the currency ahead of Brexit…

3 I MISS YOU
Two stores that enjoyed good online reviews look to have shut up shop recently. Massilia Records and Disquaire Black Music appeared to be closed and I couldn't work out if it was just coincidental, or a more permanent state of affairs. I sense the latter, sadly…

4 SMOOTH CRIMINAL
Marseille's had a problem with pickpockets, but a blitz on the criminals appears to have eased the situation recently. None of these stores open especially late but, as in any big city, it's worth keeping your wits about you.

5 EVERY DAY IS NOT LIKE SUNDAY…
With almost every shop closed in the city each Sunday, head out to Boulevard Mireille Lauze for the Méga Vide Greniers. This big flea market has a lot of junk, but I found a decent amount of vinyl there too, including, yes, more Elton John.



5 EXTEND & PLAY VINYL

Dance specialist Extend & Play Vinyl is a compact but elegant store that proves a struggle to enter when I stop by. The decks have queues and the whole place is heaving, which is always a good sign. The stacks of white-label and catalogue releases are nicely displayed and the whole place is bright and friendly. I'm asked what I'm looking for, of course, and the real answer – some rare Bananarama or even a bit of Supertramp – isn't, I sense, going to get me far. Still, irony of ironies, this would be the sort of shop where I can be almost certain to avoid more Elton John, you'd think; but, no – there he is: his excellent dance project with Pnau taunting me from the left of the counter. You can't escape the man…

6 TANGERINE

If you're looking for the sort of 'get yourself lost in boxes of dusty, random stock' store that I, for one, adore, then Tangerine satisfies all the cravings, and then some… The shop's been here for about a decade and the stool the owner gives me to sift through piles of 45s in excellent shape is much appreciated. I pick up dozens of records – sometimes for the variant covers (David Essex, Jimmy Somerville, Paul Anka and, yes, more Elton; this time, the relatively rare 1990 single *Whispers*), and Cyclope's *Wen Story (Seul Dans La Nuit)* is just too interesting to leave behind. Sandra, who recently failed to appear on a rare scheduled London concert date, couldn't get arrested in the UK during much of her mid-1980s reign across Europe as a rival to Madonna, but I loved her. The 12" of *Loreen* is a rare gap in my collection and is secured here for a couple of Euros. There's a decent amount of haggling to be indulged in on this haul, which always makes me feel peculiarly satisfied on the rare occasions when I manage to pull it off. Clearly my English reserve lay buried on this trip, although I'll confess this is the only store where I try it properly. This is a real collectors' shop, with loads of Beatles, Stones, Depeche Mode and Zeppelin, but you'll need a good few hours to give it a proper going over. I actually come back the following day to sift through more of the stock and am pleased to come away with a Tina Turner Pepsi promo package from 1987, featuring her *Break Every Rule* album (more than a tenner on Discogs) and a mint copy of a 1985 edition of French music magazine *Rock & Folk* featuring a very young-looking Madonna. Clearly, Sandra wasn't having it all her own way this side of the Channel…

If you're looking for a 'get yourself lost in boxes of dusty, random stock' store, then Tangerine satisfies all the cravings, and then some

7 SABRE TOOTH

It's a cliché, but also generally a sound one: never judge a book by its cover. Research prior to my visit suggested Sabre Tooth is a rock and metal specialist, and the patches and studded belts I spot on arrival certainly play up to this view, but there's more here to tickle my fancy than I expected. Beyond the Motörhead, Anti-Nowhere League and Iron Maiden, worthy and well priced (here) though all that is, I find a good film-and-TV section too, including a couple of clean copies of the *Rambo: First Blood Part II* and *Rambo III* soundtracks. The latter is probably the more approachable of the two, with a decent cover of *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother* by Bill Medley. If that find raises an eyebrow in a store like this, then how about the 12" of Boney M.'s 1978 camp classic *Rasputin* (only €10) and two mint maxis from the less-celebrated catalogue of 2 Unlimited? When challenged on this eclectic range of stock, the owner shrugs, with a certain Gallic charm. I guess he likes to keep his customer base guessing (and if my French was better, I might have a more nuanced answer for you). What needs no translation is the fact this is the only store where I fail to spot any Elton. Perhaps someone had already bought it all up…

8 GALETTE RECORDS

I've spent far too many evenings in dodgy clubs doing my best to impress on the dancefloor. Those clubs have, naturally enough, created a curious appetite for the darker excesses of Eurodisco, with Italo being a particular draw for me. Galette Records – routinely billed as one of Marseille's finest vinyl retailers – truly doesn't disappoint, with one of the best selections of this genre I have come across. There's plenty of everything, of course, but when I spot the super-rare 12" of Miguel Bosé's album highlights, little else truly matters. *Chicas! – Especial Discotecas* is a Spain-only issue and highly prized by collectors like me. It doesn't come cheap, of course, but this disco-tastic relic of the Panamanian icon in, shall we say, a more 'exposed' frame of mind, is worth the price I pay for the sleeve alone. It's like owning a 45rpm memento of Studio 54. Continuing the theme, Indeep are best known for *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*. *When Boys Talk* was the follow-up, which stalled at No. 67 in the UK, probably because it was a virtual remake of the first hit. Still, it needs adding to the collection and €6 is a good price for a clean copy of the 12". Elton is present and correct and it's interesting to note that his 80s output is – again – more widely available than his (some would say better) 70s material. A handful of other individually priced Eurodisco 7" singles complete the haul, including local issues of Bobby "O"'s *I'm So Hot For You*, Sylvester's *I Who Have Nothing* (note that they lost the brackets for this local billing) and Boys Town Gang's *I Just Can't Help Believing*. There's a big soul and funk section that keeps me occupied for some time here, too and, as I pay for my finds, I notice the staff cleaning records for buyers before handing them over, which I think is a nice touch. I doubt my local charity shop will offer that service anytime soon. ●

The Trip

Getting there

There are plenty of direct two-hour flights to Marseille, but nearby airports such as Nice can be cheaper. The drive from Nice to Marseille takes over two hours and traffic can be heavy in peak season. You can get a high-speed train, with Eurostar now offering a decent service from London that will take you seven hours, with one change. Plenty of cruise ships stop at the port, too, although this is hardly your cheapest option!

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Mark O'Shaughnessy reveals how valuable record collections can materialise in the unlikeliest places…

I'm often asked what the most valuable record in my shop is, and it's a subject of constant fascination for customers.

I normally point to some hairy prog LP on our Wall Of Fame, or some tuneless vanity psych project; that is if I don't have a low-number Beatles 'White Album' up for grabs. These kind of items often hit £300/£400 and there always seems to be a steady supply of customers ready to pay such prices.

I continue to find it amazing that such releases from outfits with bearded white blokes playing 10-minute drum solos and those with sleeves picturing a whimsical maid strumming a 12-string guitar can command such inflated prices, but who am I to question other people's musical tastes? It brings to mind one of my best-ever prog/psych/folk hauls, in Resolution Records' home city of Bath, from a completely unexpected source.

Before I opened my shop, I ran a collectors' stall every Saturday at the city's Green Park Station market. One Saturday, in the middle of a freezing November afternoon, a pony-tailed, elderly chap approached me on the stall and asked if I was buying. I was gobsmacked… he was stood there in a vest, sandals (no socks) and shorts. I gasped. My nose was numb, but he seemed completely oblivious to the biting cold. Naturally, I was now intrigued and instantly replied: "Yes, what have you got to sell?" At that, he produced an orange Sainsbury's bag and handed it over to me. His fingers were turning blue, I noticed. I said to him: "Aren't you cold?" and he said: "Nah, I just got back from Thailand, it's nearly 30 degrees over there." I stifled an inner snigger and opened the bag. I didn't expect much, maybe a couple of Quo LPs… Wishbone Ash if I was (un)lucky. I pulled out the eight or 10 LPs and the first one I saw was an original copy of Pink Floyd's Columbia debut LP *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*. It was only the second true original copy I had seen, after nearly 25 years in the business, and original copies remain rare. Also in there was an orange-label Elektra UK copy of MC5's seminal debut LP *Kick Out The Jams*. Arrangements were made and the next Monday morning at 9am, I was knocking on the door of one of the grandest townhouses I'd ever seen.

HEXAGONAL HEAVEN

I would never have put my scantily clad visitor in a pad like this, but as the door opened, there he was, still vested in shorts, still sporting sandals and still no socks. Up we went, to the top storey… The top floor opened out into a kind of hexagonal-shaped bachelor pad with a vintage Eames chair sat square in the middle, face to face with some of the most expensive hi-fi equipment I had ever seen. Bang & Olufsen turntable, Linn amplifier and (at least) eight enormous, ceiling-mounted Wharfedale speakers all pointing directly to the Eames chair – simply the best audio setup I've ever seen. He flicked another switch and gave me a demo: perfect, glorious sound, no rumble, no wobble, audio clarity like crystal.

He clicked the remote and the panelling of each of the hexagonal nooks rolled aside, one by one, to reveal eight horizontal shelves, each lined with LPs

Our host then sat down, still wordless, and pressed a button on the remote control on the arm of the Eames. As he did so, the panelling of each of the hexagonal nooks rolled aside, one by one, in sequence, to reveal eight horizontal shelves, all two-deep vertically, each lined with LPs, stored spine-out, all winking at me. My heart skipped a beat…

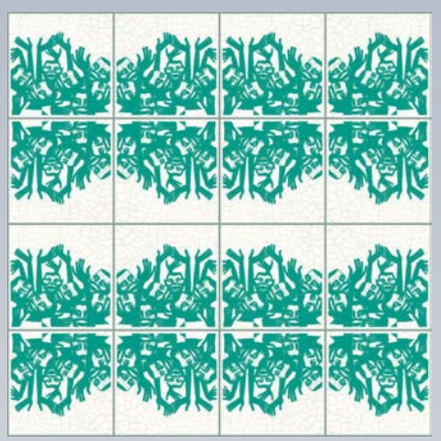
He then uttered his first three words of my visit: "There you go". Then came two more: "All yours". It was 9:02am and I was in that hexagonal heaven till 2am. I counted and catalogued the collection: 2,400-plus of the finest prog/psych/rock/blues albums I had ever seen, 90%-plus originals – and many looked unplayed. I thought I was tripping…

A price was agreed and a hefty cash deposit left, while I went home to get some sleep. I was back at 9am the next day, with a rental van and a couple of hired hands. I still have a few of the boxes from this collection in one of my storages – I'm saving them for a rainy day, because in my business, that rainy day is never too far away. I never actually even found out what this guy's name was, nor how he was living in a £2 million house in Bath, but it all served to reinforce my belief that you should never judge a book by its cover. ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Bath record shop Resolution Records and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

Jazzman Records

After dealing in records on his Camden stall for close to a decade, Jazzman Gerald started his own reissue label in 1998. Today, Jazzman Records covers multiple genres with over 50 albums and a catalogue of killer 45s. **Chris Parkin** finds out more…



When he first thought of reissuing out-of-print records, Jazzman Gerald – as record buyers have known him since the early 90s – didn't have many examples to follow. In the mid-to-late 90s, major labels and independents in the UK hadn't yet cottoned on to reissuing records whose values had skyrocketed beyond the means of even the most determined collectors. So, in 1998, Gerald stepped into the breach and launched Jazzman Records.

Gerald knew what needed reissuing. He'd been dealing in records for nearly 10 years already, bringing collections of soul, jazz and funk back from the US to sell on his stall in Camden Market and via mail order. So he decided to begin with Kathleen Emery's rare funk 45, *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*, and hasn't stopped hipping people to long-lost music since.

Now, two decades on, Jazzman Records has grown into a family of imprints that run the stylistic gamut from rhumba-infused R&B and Popcorn – Belgium's answer to Northern Soul – to Florida funk and a strand of sleazy rock 'n' roll and R&B known to collectors as 'tittyshakers'.

As well as a massive catalogue of 45s, Jazzman has put out 50-plus albums, including Burton Inc.'s boogie rarity *L.A. Will Make You Pay*, a recent reissue of LaVice & Company's Satan-slaying gospel-funk masterpiece *Two Sisters From Bagdad* and albums by French jazz musician Jef Gilson that Gerald went to great lengths to make a reality. "We look for five things," he explains. "Master tapes, unreleased tapes or acetates, original photos and ephemera, recording and biographical information and a meeting with the artist. Sometimes it's impossible, because these things just don't exist, or the musicians are no longer with us. With Jef Gilson, we got all five and were able to put together

"RELEASING RECORDS LIKE [THE *SPIRITUAL JAZZ* SERIES] IS LIKE DOING A DJ SET THAT LASTS FOR YEARS. IF YOU PLAY CRAZY STUFF TOO EARLY, NOBODY GETS IT AND THEY ALL GO HOME"

comprehensive musical documents of a fascinating artist. I was able to show him the records we made of his life's work before he died in 2012."

With an encyclopedic knowledge of his musical niche, Gerald knows exactly where to look – and when the time is right. A few years ago, he shelved plans to reissue records from the then-unmined world of spiritual jazz because "the time didn't feel right". It does now, though, and last year, the *Spiritual Jazz* compilations reached *Volume 7: Islam*. "When we finally released them, it was embraced immediately. It would've killed me for it to be rejected, which it would've been a few years earlier. 10 years on, and *Spiritual Jazz 8: Japan* is imminent. Releasing records like this is like doing a DJ set that lasts for years. If you play crazy stuff too early, nobody gets it and they all go home. Play it later when they're a bit fucked up, and you can play all the weird shit you want."

The quality of the reissue market has improved, thinks Gerald, but he still sees shockers in the racks. "A good reissue is a historical document, so it needs to be curated with care," he says. Which is guaranteed with every Jazzman release. ●

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Sonny Rollins

WAY OUT WEST

CRAFT RECORDINGS

When you see Sonny Rollins on the cover of this 1957 masterpiece standing among Mojave Desert cactii in a Stetson hat and gunbelt, you'd be forgiven for thinking this is a simple cash-in on the craze for 50s Westerns. But that would sell this landmark album rather short. This was the first of Rollins' tenor power-trio albums and its lack of piano was a bold statement of intent. He's got plenty of room to stretch out, and the same goes for Ray Brown on bass and drummer Shelly Manne. On opener *I'm An Old Cowhand*, Manne's knowing drum fills and backbeats pay homage to Western soundtracks of the day without ever sounding patronising or descending into parody. Rollins lets rip on the trio's version of the Duke Ellington classic ballad *Solitude*, while the superb *Come, Gone* finds the band really hitting their stride. Such is the chemistry between the three performers here, it's astonishing to think they'd never played together before. This double-disc edition contains the six master takes originally issued on the LP, plus the three alternate takes that appeared on the 1988 CD reissue. There are also a few surprises – notably the alternate version of *There Is No Greater Love* and the first of the three passes Rollins and company made over the title track. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Tom Waits

MULE VARIATIONS

ANTI-

For many growing up in the 90s, the *Punk-O-Rama* compilation series served as the ultimate introduction to a wide range of US artists signed to indie label Epitaph and its subsidiary, ANTI-. However, on 1999's *Volume 4*, alongside punk mainstays Pennywise, Rancid, Bad Religion, etc, sat one of music's great enigmas, Tom Waits. Lifted from his then-recently released album *Mule Variations* – now reissued on remastered 180g heavyweight vinyl – the track *Big In Japan* was a startling change of pace: a distorted, jazzy-blues hybrid. There's no doubting that this quirky stomper, which opened Waits' 12th studio album, introduced the visionary poet to a whole new generation of fans. Waits had always been a master of the musical collage and *Mule Variations* proved as adventurous and yet accessible as anything he'd done. Tracks such as lead single *Hold On*, *House Where Nobody Lives* and *Picture In A Frame* are among the most personal he's ever penned, while *Get Behind The Mule*, *Black Market Baby*, *Filipino Box Spring Hog* and the quite disturbing *What's He Building?* are the kind of oddball gonzo delights that will terrify and thrill in equal measure. It remains an absolute masterpiece, deserving to be discovered all over again. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Ramones
ROCKET TO RUSSIA
RHINO

Picking up directly from where the Ramones' sophomore record *Leave Home* had left off, *Rocket To Russia* rides the wave of bubblegum surf-pop-rock which Joey, Johnny, Dee Dee and Tommy had collectively established on previous outings. Indeed, it wouldn't be too dismissive to suggest that many standout *Rocket To Russia* moments are deliberate developments on old favourites. Opener *Cretin Hop* mirrors *Blitzkrieg Bop*; lead single *Sheena Is A Punk Rocker* is a direct descendant of *Judy Is A Punk*; while *We're A Happy Family* perfectly complements *Pinhead*. Boisterous covers of *Surfin' Bird* and *Do You Wanna Dance?*, along with many other album highlights such as *Teenage Lobotomy*; *Rockaway Beach*; *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow* and *I Don't Care*, could be swapped directly with any song from the band's first two albums, and no body of work would suffer as a result. With an added 40th Anniversary Tracking Mix by original engineer Ed Stasium, it all sounds as vibrant as it did in 1977. By the time *Rocket...* had been released, the punk-rock rollercoaster had reached a giddy new height and for some, the only way was down. The album signalled the end of the ride for Tommy, who quit to concentrate on production work. Music would never quite sound the same again. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT
9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Propaganda
A SECRET WISH
BMG

Arguably our generation's first internationally credible, commercially viable German act – in Britain, Nena failed to outlive *99 Luftballons* – Propaganda were formed in Düsseldorf by Ralf Dörper, of industrial pioneers Die Krupps. His former band's fiercer approach was sweetened by the addition of – first – vocalist Susanne Freytag and instrumentalist Andreas Thein, then classically trained Michael Mertens and another vocalist, Claudia Brücken. Often mistakenly remembered as a Trevor Horn production, their 1985 debut was actually helmed by Stephen Lipson. Nonetheless, Horn contributed musically – as did Glenn Gregory, Steve Howe, Stewart Copeland and even David Sylvian. An immersive exercise in Teutonic bombast, *A Secret Wish*'s nonetheless poetic approach is encapsulated by opener *Dream Within A Dream*, which constructs increasingly rousing layers of synthetic brass, organs, pummelling drums and howling guitars over Edgar Allan Poe's text. Other highlights include the mysterious *p:Machinery*, the assault of second hit, *Duel* – and its noisy twin sister, *Jewel* – plus an imposing cover of Josef K's *Sorry For Laughing*. *Long Live Vinyl* founder Ian Peel's liner notes complete this crucial reissue. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT
9/10

Leroy Hutson

HUTSON/HUTSON II

ACID JAZZ

When at university, Leroy Hutson was a dorm buddy with Donny Hathaway, and the two of them went on to co-write the all-time soul-jazz classic *The Ghetto* together. Later on, Hutson was handpicked by none other than Curtis Mayfield as his direct replacement in legendary R&B vocal group, The Impressions. With peers of such stature in the world of soul, it's a mystery to many why his career fell between the cracks in the UK – and these lovingly repackaged reissues of his first two solo albums only serve to heighten the intrigue. Originally released out of Chicago on Mayfield's Curtom label in the mid 70s, both have been sought-after rare-groove collectors' items for decades, and with the cool quality of Hutson's seriously soulful arrangements, their desirability isn't difficult to fathom. He may have left it too late for superstardom on these shores, but the secret is most definitely out. *Gary Tipp*

VERDICT

8/10

Felt

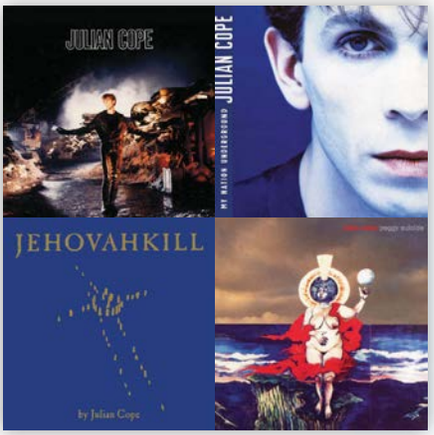
VINYL REISSUES

CHERRY RED

In an act of cool symmetry, or maybe just plain perversity, Felt released 10 albums and 10 singles over the duration of their 10-year existence. Now, after years of being unavailable on vinyl, the first five have been revisited, remastered, repackaged and reissued by Cherry Red under the auspices of the band's eccentric genius, the mononymous Lawrence. Such was his involvement, he even decided to rename one of the reissues – so the instrumental album formerly known as *Let The Snakes Crinkle Their Heads To Death* now goes by the new title *The Seventeenth Century*. Amid a constantly revolving door of line-up changes, the band's sound shifted over the course of these initial releases – from the Television-influenced primitive pop of their fantastic debut to the full-blown majestic, cosmic swirl of the later albums. All of which adds up to five slices of reissued idiosyncratic perfection, from a band whose status will forever belong as 'cult'. *Gary Tipp*

VERDICT

8/10



Julian Cope

VINYL REISSUES

UMC/ISLAND

After the implosion of The Teardrop Explodes and two underperforming solo albums, Julian Cope's new Rock God persona was a do-or-die affair and the resultant four LPS are now reissued on 180g vinyl. Buoyed by the precision-tooled 80s pop-rock singles *World Shut Your Mouth* and *Trampolene*, the *Saint Julian* album almost made it to the Top 10. Elsewhere, Cope is on fire, particularly on the punchy rock of *Pulsar*. *My Nation Underground* was a concerted effort to capitalise on that (relative) commercial breakthrough. It has its moments, but there's a sense of diminishing returns. In contrast, *Peggy Suicide* introduced heavily politicised material and Cope's interests in the occult. For the poll-tax lamenting *Soldier Blue*, he even throws Lenny Bruce samples into the mix. And the terrific *East Easy Rider* deserved to be a massive hit. The ever-restless Cope then stretched out into Krautrock territory with the adventurous *Jehovahkill*. A critique of mainstream religion's destructiveness, it's now seen as one of his best records. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10

Belle And Sebastian

HOW TO SOLVE OUR HUMAN PROBLEMS EPS

MATADOR

These three EPs – released individually over the past three months, and as a boxset – come from the same rejuvenated place as 2015 album *Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance*. Written like singles, they go straight for the jugular. The familiar subject matter – unrequited crushes, the romance of everyday, grey-sky reality, awkward human discourse – is couched in increasingly wry disillusionment, yet their brooding melancholy only gives these songs more heart. *Sweet Dew Lee* is like an extended disco jam performed by Pete Astor's The Weather Prophets; *Part 2* opener *Show Me The Sun* starts out as The Rubettes gone funk before turning into a Glaswegian *California Dreamin'*. But the best is saved until last. *Part 3* towers above everything else, with its future anthems *Poor Boy* and *Best Friend* – a sweeping, Dusty Springfield-inspired soul epic which spears the heart and lifts it high. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

8/10

Jonathan Wilson

RARE BIRDS

BELLA UNION

Of the maximalist approach to his third solo album, Jonathan Wilson says: "We're all fishing downstream from Townes Van Zandt, so the only thing left to do is go big". Save for the synth excursion on *Hard To Get Over*, the influence of Trevor Horn that Wilson talks about in the pre-publicity for *Rare Birds* is hard to detect. Instead, his previous 60s and 70s classic-rock touchstones still bubble to the surface on this expansive and multi-layered meditation about a failed relationship. Wilson flits from perky psych-rocker *Trafalgar Square* to graceful introspection on *Me*, soars beautifully on *Over The Midnight*, then serves up a George Harrison-esque slide-guitar masterclass with *There's A Light*. The tougher slide-blues rock of the title track is a clear standout, alongside psychedelic homage *Miriam Montague*. If the NSFW lyrics to *49 Hairflips* come as a jolt, Wilson's reactions to heartbreak elsewhere on the record mostly sound beatific. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Yo La Tengo

THERE'S A RIOT GOING ON

MATADOR

For more than 30 years, indie mainstays Yo La Tengo have enchanted their fans and critics alike with their eclectic combination of lo-fi alt-rock and sprawling shoegazy electronica. On the 15 challenging dreamscapes that make up *There's A Riot Going On*, the band's first album proper since 2013's *Fade* (bridged only by 2015 covers record *Stuff Like That There*), there is a sense that this enduring love affair may well continue – but not win over too many doubters. It all starts in psychedelic fashion with the atmospheric instrumental *You Are Here*, before falling gently into the hypnotising folk of *Shades Of Blue*; *She May, She Might* and the pulsating patterns of *For You Too* and *Ashes*. But then the album turns divisive… listeners will either revel in the ambient rhythms of *Shortwave*; *Above The Sound*; *Forever* and *Out Of The Pool*, or be frustrated that the tracks sonically progress without really going anywhere. It's another exercise in boundary-pushing experimentation, but one that won't appeal to everyone. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

6/10

Ezra Furman

TRANSANGELIC EXODUS

BELLA UNION

Ezra Furman's second album with Bella Union is an intense and, at times, absurd drama, backdropped by a preternatural style of garage punk. Thematically, the narrative thread portrays a "queer outlaw saga" in which angels exist as culpable entities, devoid of all piety and forced to become unlawful second-hand citizens. The LP deals with authoritarianism, inequity and injustice; the author – by his own admission – making comparisons to contemporary US society. Furman and his protagonists revolt with ferocity, howling with rage and pride in opener *Suck The Blood From My Wound*: "To them, we'll always be freaks". Rooted in The Velvet Underground, there are hints of Daniel Johnston in the vocal style, and influences ranging from Vampire Weekend to a 1956 gay-themed novel by James Baldwin called *Giovanni's Room*. With this album, Furman has tapped into a very real sense of fear and disassociation among outsiders like him. *Sam Willis*

VERDICT

7/10

Hookworms

MICROSHIFT

DOMINO

Hookworms' take on proto-psych drove the central sound of their first two albums and led to them becoming a blisteringly ferocious live band. On album three, they've undergone a noticeable shift and expanded their palette and horizons considerably. There's still fuzzy guitar and swirling, immersive soundscapes, but they're spread out across more electronic experimentations and richer tones as a whole. There are also as many pop-leaning melodies on these tracks as there are sideways excursions. These can vary from gorgeous dream pop on *Each Time We Pass* (with Virginia Wing's Alice Merida Richards on vocals) to a quick blast of atonal sax on the gritty and propulsive *Boxing Day*. The shedding of the heavily layered vocals opens up an emotive vulnerability to the lyrics which, combined with the shift in sonic direction, often makes Hookworms sound like a completely different band altogether, a move that is audacious, but unquestionably a successful one.
Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT

8/10

The Soft Moon

CRIMINAL

SACRED BONES RECORDS

Luis Vasquez's fourth album as The Soft Moon looks to explore some of the guilt and anger attached to the difficult and violent childhood he had. This manifests itself in an album filled with throbbing clangs of industrial electronics that hiss and spit and gargle, as his vocals often feel guttural in delivery but smothered in effects – as though they're still screaming to be heard. The album weaves between these moments of Nine Inch Nails-like full-throttle charge and slower, more brooding and atmospheric moments, as on the sci-fi-flavoured *Give Something*. There's an overarching chilliness to this record and, despite the emotional essence at the core of the album's theme, it still feels unsettling and distancing across its cold-wave and post-punk explorations. While the tone becomes a little repetitive over the full album, the visceral essence of the record still makes for a powerful – often brutal – and immersive listen. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

7/10

Poliça & Stargaze

MUSIC FOR THE LONG EMERGENCY

TRANSGRESSIVE

This collaboration between the electro-pop outfit Poliça and the Berlin chamber orchestra, s t a r g a z e, is an extension of their previous release, on which they presented reimagined workings of Steve Reich compositions. This work is far less focused on minimalism and instead is a much wider-reaching, varied and lusher series of songs on an album that explores as many genres as it does paces and tones. While the album feels a little scattered and tonally incoherent at times due to its ambition, there are moments of revelation in which the sweeping strings, humming electronics and Channy Leaneagh's subtly treated vocals all merge harmoniously and innovatively, as on the excellent *Marrow* or *Cursed*. Not all the tracks land neatly, but there's a pleasure in a collaboration that seems to be pushing the limits of each of its participants as they hurtle into unexplored territory.
Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT
7/10

Rae Morris

SOMEONE OUT THERE

ATLANTIC RECORDS

Rachel Morris coos: "These are new beginnings," on the follow-up to 2015's over-hyped *Unguarded*, and it's true she's come a long way: *Someone Out There* is definitely not the work of the young woman whose over-eagerness to please caught the ear of the similarly minded Chris Martin. She's radiant on the tropically flavoured *Atletico*, as well as *Wait For The Rain*, whose superfluous vocal effects can't detract from its grandiose inclinations. *Physical Form*'s emphatic piano chords and swooping vocals recall Kate Bush, but quieter tunes – the title track's empathetic, *Sliding Doors* scenario, the persuasively sappy *Rose Garden* – confirm this as an imaginative, satisfying reinvention. It's tempting to credit Fryars – who takes production reins for much of the album – for the development, but this is definitely a team effort. Indeed, so great was their chemistry, especially on the spine-tingling opener *Push Me To My Limit*, that they (ahem) began making sweet music beyond the studio's walls. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT
8/10

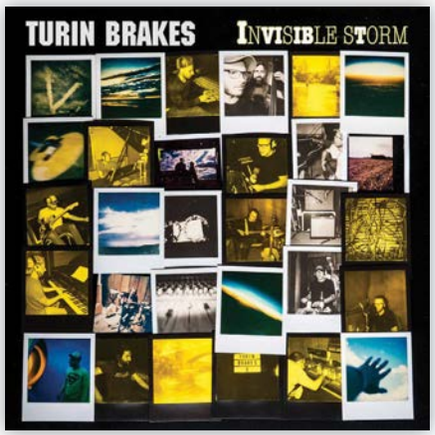
Nick J.D. Hodgson

TELL YOUR FRIENDS

PREDICTION RECORDS

There is, sadly, a sense of 'Will this do?' about former Kaiser Chief Hodgson's debut. He boasts that *Thank You* was written during a single, man-flu-afflicted evening, but the song – a sappy, sub-Beatles number which sounds as though it was tossed out like a Kleenex – sadly suggests this wasn't because inspiration found him. That said, its melody is as sticky as a used hanky and the same's true of *Suitable*, another budget-Beatles tune undermined chiefly by a chorus that's a masterpiece of bathos: "You're beautiful/ And we're suitable". He's equally romantic on the jolly *Tomorrow I Love You* – where he promises to "shake your hand", a gesture unlikely to match, say, leaping off a cliff to deliver Milk Tray – while the plodding *Don't Forget To Go To Sleep* is similarly insipid. *My Own American Dream*, meanwhile, offers a pale imitation of Madness, but *Honest Face* – honestly – recalls They Might Be Giants.
Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT
6/10



Turin Brakes

INVISIBLE STORM

COOKING VINYL

If Turin Brakes have previously appeared a little whey-faced, the quartet tackle that head-on with their eighth album's opening track, the thrusting *Would You Be Mine*. Its motorik beat, looping bassline and quiet, curving keyboard lines provide a thrilling introduction, as well as a reminder the band are still capable of surprises. It is, unfortunately, a short-lived display of unfamiliar energy, but helps establish a fresh patina for a sound that recalls the vintage MOR tones perfected by Nigel Godrich on Beck's *Sea Change*. This is most audible on *Smoke And Mirrors*, with its relaxed pace and dampened snare drum, as well as *Lost In The Woods*, whose harmonies, surprisingly, recall Fleetwood Mac. On *Don't Know Much* and *Deep Sea Diver*, meanwhile, they strip things back, nodding conspicuously to Neil Young; but *Wait*, a jaunty number, and *Always*, with its dainty backing vocals, return to more familiar, 'English' territory. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

Wild Beasts

LAST NIGHT ALL MY DREAMS CAME TRUE

DOMINO

Always quit while you're ahead, they say, and Wild Beasts were doing pretty much that when they called last orders late in 2017. There will be some who argue they peaked early on with their second album, 2009's *Two Dancers*, an unusually imaginative, sophisticated take on 21st-century indie rock, but their willingness to experiment kept people loyal right to the end. This parting shot, a pseudo 'Greatest Hits' recorded live at RAK Studios – the second in their label's Domino Documents series – leans heaviest on 2016's final album, *Boy King*: a growling *Big Cat* and *Alpha Female*'s dark synth-pop are undeniable highlights, even if *Celestial Creatures* provides a surprisingly muted finale. It's gratifying, though, to be reminded of the thrill of their original breakthrough album's *Hooting & Howling*, while its *All The King's Men* provides a reminder of the raw power of Hayden Thorpe's occasional falsetto. Farewell, then, animal magic. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

John Oates

ARKANSAS

THIRTY TIGERS

If Steve Martin can make banjo albums, and Hugh Laurie can play the blues, there's no reason John Oates – of blue-eyed soul duo Hall & Oates – can't make a country record, especially given Shane Richie's endeavours. After all, Oates looks the part, and his crack backing musicians add even more authenticity than his salt-and-pepper goatee. So on *Arkansas* – originally intended as a tribute to his idol, Mississippi John Hurt, whose *Stack-O-Lee* he buffs up tastefully – Oates explores dusty acoustic songs from Americana's past, not least Emmett Miller's *Anytime*, its nimble fingerpicking draped in pedal steel instead of Dixieland brass. Conveniently, his croaky voice also sounds a little like Springsteen's, whether on the bluesy *Pallet Soft And Low*, where he's joined by tasteful gospel-tinged backing vocalists, or the title track, which overflows with the distant winds and train tracks of America's prairie mythology. Someone needs to give the man a whisky. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

6/10

IT'S BACK!

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REVIEWS

U.S. Girls

IN A POEM UNLIMITED

4AD

It's hard to know what to expect from a name like U.S. Girls, and it's even more confusing given that it refers ostensibly to one person, Meg Remy, who's made it her business to shift styles repeatedly. Like labelmates Tune-Yards and Grimes, she started in the lo-fi underground, but these days appears comfortable applying the lessons she learned there to more commercial material. 2015's *Half Free*, however, barely hinted at this sixth studio album's polished pop leanings. She adopts a disco strut for the Blondie-ish *Mad As Hell*, with further hints of Debbie Harry audible in the virtuous vocals of *L-Over*, while *Rage Of Plastics* even toys with the blues in a manner recalling Alannah Myles' *Black Velvet*. Seductively slinky opener *Velvet 4 Sale*, though, depends upon both refined chord changes and her occasionally woozy, double-tracked voice, while *Incidental Boogie* sacrifices melody for subdued squalls of strident noise. Go, Girls! Go! *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

7/10

Field Music

OPEN HERE

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Since their 2005 debut, Sunderland's Field Music have grown from an of-the-time indie outfit into a group who consistently explore the boundaries of pop as a core part of their evolution. Their Hall & Oates via Talking Heads blend of pop continues on album seven with pleasing results. The opener *Time In Joy* is a funk-tinged, bass-wobbling stomper that feels as naturally rhythmic as it does intricately constructed. The album is full of rich instrumentation, deft delivery and, as ever, the melodic vocal interplay between the brothers is a central tone of the record – their voices seem to have gained both range and versatility over the years. The skipping electronic bounce of tracks such as *Count It Up* is joyous and captures a tone that is felt across the entire album – which is one of a group seemingly having a lot of fun and making some unshakably infectious, yet meaningful, pop music in the process. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

8/10

Go-Kart Mozart

MOZART'S MINI-MART

WEST MIDLANDS RECORDS

Go-Kart Mozart's second, 2005 album was entitled *Tearing Up The Album Chart*, but that they've never done: Lawrence – once of Felt and Denim – remains little more than a name for musicians to drop. Nothing, however, interrupts his dreams of stardom, even concessions to gritty reality. He may sing "I'm living on a tenner a day," but on *Relative Poverty*, he still throws around "Awopbopalula"s like spare change, despite a recording budget that can't even buy lunch. Like Pulp, he reveres the 1970s, if seen through a lens of Lidl LSD, throwing in social comment with as much conviction as confessions such as *Zelda's In The Spotlight*'s "Why do you treat me with contempt/ After you've fucked me?" *Knickers On The Line By 3 Chord Fraud*'s title sums up its lyrics, but there's a vicious joke hidden there, while the squidgy *Nub End In A Coke Can*'s 56 seconds can't deny its poetry. *Wyndham Wallace*

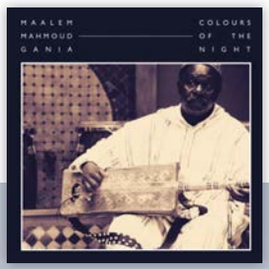
VERDICT

7/10

Genre Hopping

New African music

Africa's rich and varied musical history is a constant source of fascination for reissue labels – but here, **Chris Parkin** checks out recent releases from around the continent…



There appears to be an almost endless supply of forgotten gems scattered across Africa waiting to be dusted off. The number of labels involved in the excavation work is testament to this. But there's also a never-ending stream of new music emerging from Africa that shouldn't be overlooked in this quest for old gold. If you haven't heard Ifriqiyya Électrique's industrial mutation of Tunisia's Banga traditions, or Cairo's ecstatic electro chaabi sound, or Ghana's kologo-pop superstar King Ayisoba, or the psychedelic odysseys undertaken by Kinshasa's 25-member Kasai Allstars, then you need to remedy this immediately. There's much more, too.

Out last year, but still worth a bump now, was *Colours Of The Night* by Moroccan Gnawa master and guembri player Maalem Mahmoud Gania. The Essaouira-born musician died in 2015 after a prolonged illness but last year, Brighton's Hive Mind Records label gave his final studio album, recorded in Casablanca in 2013, a posthumous release as their inaugural offering. Gania, who played with Bill Laswell and Peter Brötzmann during his lifetime, uses the relentless groundswell of the three-stringed guembri, shaken percussion and his sweet, conversational voice to deliver hypnotic, spirit-invoking trance music.

Imarhan are following in the footsteps of Tuareg desert-rock godfathers Tinariwen, whose loping, heat-haze rock 'n' roll sounds a little like a Sahara-based, sand-blasted Can with a penchant for armed rebellion. But whereas members of Tinariwen once fought against the oppressive Malian army who threatened their very existence, Algeria's Imarhan are members of a more optimistic generation engaged with music from all over the world. Although still indebted to the unmistakable desert blues of Tinariwen, Imarhan's new album *Temet* branches out ambitiously from their meditative jams and extends into sunny psych-rock, spaced-out disco and sleek 80s-funk territory.

> IMARHAN'S LOPING, HEAT-HAZE ROCK 'N' ROLL SOUNDS A LITTLE LIKE A SAHARA-BASED, SAND-BLASTED CAN WITH A PENCHANT FOR ARMED REBELLION

Also representing 21st-century Africa is Nadah El Shazly, a Cairo-based musician and producer with an uncompromising vision. Her first solo album, *Ahwar,* was recorded in studios in Egypt and Canada with assistance from members of Cairo's The Dwarfs Of East Agouza, who peddle a sinewy, playful blend of Arabic psychedelia and feature Alan Bishop, whose Sublime Frequencies label has done much to open up Western ears to music from around the world. El Shazly's *Ahwar*, though, is a fever-dream of semi-improvised Arabic avant-jazz with more than enough intensity and exploratory ideas to elicit comparisons with Annette Peacock and Diamanda Galás.

Unexpectedly, there's also a new album from Hailu Mergia, the Ethiopian accordionist, keyboardist and band leader whose music was rediscovered when Awesome Tapes From Africa reissued his spacey 1985 Ethio-jazz album fusing traditional melodies with synths and drum machine, *Hailu Mergia & His Classical Instrument: Shemonmuanaye*. *Pitchfork* nailed it when they described Mergia's solo work as like an Ethiopian Cluster. Lala Belu is Mergia's first new album since his music was rediscovered and pitches up somewhere between his solo work, Herbie Hancock and the Ethiopian jazz-funk he made with his Addis Ababa group, the Walias Band, in the 70s and early 80s. ●

HOW TO BUY HEADPHONES

Offering a more intimate music-listening experience that can open up a new sonic perspective on your favourite records, there's no shortage of headphones on the market. **Paul Rigby** offers some essential pointers and buying guidelines...

Headphones are, on the face of it, simple to buy and use. You remove them from their box, plug 'em in and you're off. No set up, no tweaking, no calibration and no screwdrivers or Allen keys. Easy, eh? Well, yes. And also, no.

The problem with headphones is that many people who buy them have little idea, in fact, what it is they are buying. This is because, in terms of hi-fi equipment, headphones are probably the only pieces of audiophile gear that has not only successfully broken through to the lifestyle arena with force, but has been completely accepted and utilised by non-hi-fi users.

The problem with applying this purchase philosophy to headphones is that the chosen products will always give you a noise: many purchases will provide a decent playback, but few will ever achieve your ideal sound. Unless you're Lottery lucky.

HifiMan's Sundaras are open-back planar magnetic headphones

Meze's Audio 99 Classics are an over-the-ear closed-back design with distinctive walnut earcups

I'm here to make you Lottery lucky. Every single time.

So let's talk about headphones. Not earphones, headphones. The things that actually sit on your head, not the bits of metal or plastic that are overly intimate with your ear canal.

During this round-up, I'm also going to ignore noise cancellation. I'm here to talk about getting the best-quality sound possible. Noise-cancellation headphones offer the same sound quality for those who've ever rocked out in a padded cell.

GOT YOUR BACK

There are a couple of basic engineering principles to think about when you think about buying a pair of headphones. Both relate to the shape of the chassis or, more specifically, the left and right bits of the headphones known to 60s radio DJs as 'cans'. Firstly, are the headphones closed- or open-backed? You can literally see the difference between the two. Open-backed headphones will have holes, open veins or some other trendy-looking cuts or slices into the outside of the can itself. Closed-backed headphones remove these openings. The can will be sealed completely.

If you look around the internet, you'll read a lot of rot that allies closed- or open-backed headphones with noise cancellation. Open- and closed-backed headphone designs

The Sr80es from Grado are a good entry-level option

have been around a lot longer than any de rigueur noise-cancellation label. Back then, noise cancellation was turning your TV off. Yes, with closed backed headphones, there is a small measure of noise cancellation, a secondary bonus effect which means that, if you're sitting next to someone with open-backed headphones, you will more than likely hear the music quite clearly and loudly and, if you then sit next to someone wearing closed-backed headphones, you won't. Don't think that closed-backed headphones provide an effective noise-cancelling solution, though. They don't.

The point of open-backed headphones is to add air and space into the soundstage, providing a naturalistic sound with dynamic reach and fragility to the treble. Closed backs enhance the bass response, preventing any lower frequencies from leaving and adding, to all intents and purposes, a sort of loudness EQ effect to the soundstage which boosts bass, but also restricts the mids and treble. It's a personal sound-preference thing.

ON OR OVER?

On a similar basis, some headphone cans and their pads sit on the ear; others enclose completely (or go 'over') the ear. Again, the point of this is tonal. The over-the-ear design will trap many of the frequencies ▶

THE POINT OF OPEN-BACKED HEADPHONES IS TO ADD AN ELEMENT OF AIR AND SPACE INTO THE SOUNDSTAGE, PROVIDING A MORE NATURALISTIC SOUND WITH DYNAMIC REACH AND SOME FRAGILITY TO THE TREBLE

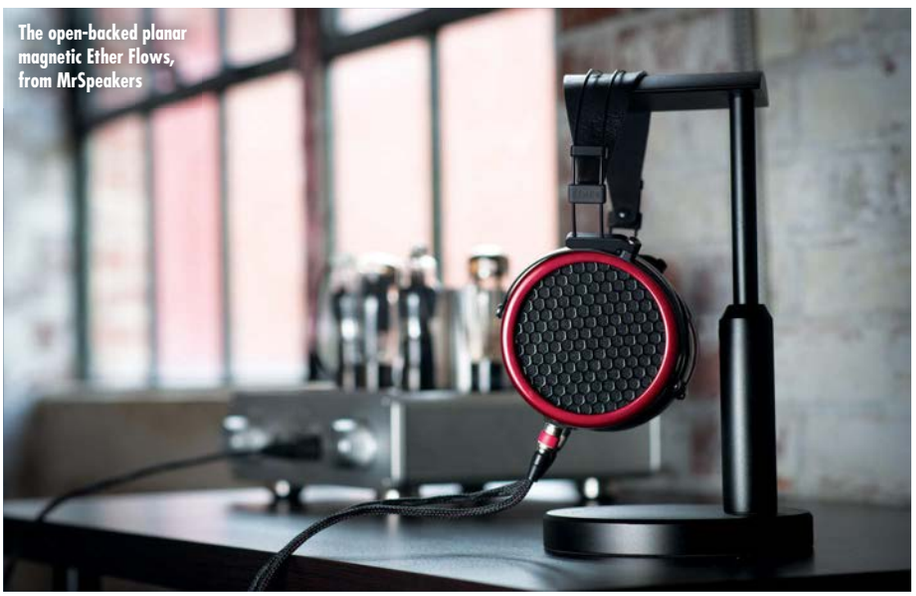
swimming around your lug 'ole, which can enhance the lower frequencies, giving you more mass and strength to the bass and, in theory, deepening it.

On the other side of the coin, on-the-ear designs allow frequencies to leave the ear, which means those frequencies are free to roam and won't bump into each other. The midrange details should be enhanced, but the bass will not be as strong or as hefty. It's another personal sound-preference thing.

THE GENERATION GAME

How the sound itself is generated can be a major factor in both the final sound envelope, and also the price. There are a few esoteric approaches, plus others aimed squarely at earphones that I will ignore for now. Most value-for-money (and quite a few high-end) headphones will rely on a tried-and-trusted suite of headphone-driver technologies, called the dynamic driver. Apart from providing a quality speaker at a relatively low price, they're also effective in terms of producing firm bass frequencies.

More expensive to buy – because they are harder to produce – are planar magnetic drivers. Providing a diaphragm sandwiched between magnets, the resultant electromagnetic field does a sonic tango with the magnets to produce sound. Much harder to produce (or, rather, to produce well), electrostatic technologies are terribly difficult to design well. It's tough to design and produce full-scale electrostatic speakers, never mind miniaturising the technology and stuffing it into a pair of speakers… especially as you're playing around with thin electrically charged diaphragms, conductive plates and special amplifiers.



The open-backed planar magnetic Ether Flows, from MrSpeakers

X-TERMINATE!

Terminations are our focus here – those plugs at the end of the cable that are always ignored, yet oh-so-critical to the final sound quality from headphones. Let's say you have a top-quality pair of headphones with a full-sized 6.35mm plug and you want to plug it into a headphone amplifier, for example, that has only a mini-3.5mm socket. What do you do? You reach for a converter plug, don't you? The moment you attach the converter, you lower the sound quality of the headphones, no matter what the quality of the headphones or the amp. I've done extensive tests and there is a sonic difference. You can hear it more through better-quality kit, I grant you, but the differences are there.

So, please try to match the sockets with the headphone plugs when buying. Some headphones, though, will arrive with two different cables offering both types of connectors. If so, you're sorted.

WIRED OR WIRELESS?

A quick and simple one, this. Generally, wired offers superior sound quality, design innovation and, often, extra comfort and lighter weight. Wireless? Mobility. That's what it's good at. That's the point. Nothing else. ●

BUDGET

There are plenty of options at entry level

AKG K72

PRICE £35

UK.AKG.COM

Stylish and comfy, this is a closed-back design that sits over the ears and is light in weight. The mids are quite smooth in nature, but the bass performs well, too. A nice blend of the two.

GRADO SR80E

PRICE £89

GRADO.CO.UK

It's the 'e' bit that makes all the difference. Detail fiends will love these, with impressive treble and midrange and a cool design.

PHILIPS SHB8850NC

PRICE £90

PHILIPS.CO.UK

If you are set on wireless headphones, these are a great choice. They offer decent detail and space around the soundstage, a compact design and excellent value for money.

MIDRANGE

Step up a level and you'll be rewarded with design finesse

KEF
M500

PRICE £200

KEF.COM

Looking for a quality pair of wired headphones for both your turntable and mobile use? Try this comfortable design; the mids are rounded a touch, bass is excellent and detail remains very good.

MEZE AUDIO
99 CLASSICS

PRICE £279

MEZEAUDIO.COM

Over the ear, closed-back designs with solid walnut earcups. Based upon 400mm dynamic drivers, they come with two sets of detachable Kevlar-wrapped OFC cable with an inline mic/controller and 3.5mm termination. The build quality is first rate, the soundstage well defined and bass is powerful.

SENNHEISER
HD 660 S

PRICE £430

EN-UK.SENNHEISER.COM

An effective successor to the legendary open-backed HD 650 with more detail, greater clarity and dynamic extension and impressive sound quality, plus two cables, a standard 6.35mm and a balanced Pentaconn.

HIGH-END

Refined choices for big spenders

HIFIMAN
SUNDARA

PRICE £449

HIFIMAN.COM

Planar magnetic, over the ear and open backed. Offering deep bass with good control over sub-bass and some bloom into the smooth mids, the Sundaras add a warming effect, although the high-end remains rather energetic.

AUDEZE
LCD-3 FAZOR

PRICE £1,699

AUDEZE.COM

The Fazor elements are the bits that really makes these headphones sing. They move sound around the internal magnets, allowing it to flow and extending the high end to improve dynamics resulting in superb detail and a refined listen.

MRSPEAKERS
ETHER FLOW

PRICE £1,750

ELECTROMOD.CO.UK

Another planar magnetic model and open backed, but on the ear – with the company's own development technology featuring TrueFlow for low noise and low distortion. They're comfortable and sound beautiful.

ELIPSON
OMEGA 100 RIAA BT CARBON BLACK
MIDRANGE LIFESTYLE TURNTABLE WITH LUXURY FEATURES

£699 *www.avoke.co.uk 01628 857958*

Offering a design that combines quality materials with lifestyle features, **Paul Rigby** reviews Elipson's Omega 100 RIAA BT Carbon Black…

It seems that modern-day turntables are divided into two distinct types. There's the 'purist', and purest, approach, where every penny of the turntable's design and engineering has been shovelled into extracting as much sonic detail as possible from the deck. This results in a relatively 'stripped' end product, with no fancy toys or fripperies. This is what audiophiles like, expect and find wholly comforting.

The other type is a relatively new breed, which promotes productivity with compromise and includes this Carbon Black model from Elipson. Offering non-audiophile and digital features, it has been designed to appeal to the lifestyle audience: that is to say, beginners without any bias or preconceived ideas; those whose sonic requirements extend beyond vinyl; plus broadminded vinyl fans who see new ways of creating and consuming music media. It's also aimed at those vinyl users who are not quite so perfectionist about extracting every last ounce of sound quality from their turntable. Audiophiles hate this type of turntable… Everyone else loves them. The Chinese know this and have been producing similar, OEM-capable budget turntables for brands such as Dual, Lenco and Audio-Technica for years.

LIFESTYLE CHOICES

This setup has resulted in a gap in the market, though. What if you want a turntable with lifestyle features, but you don't want them integrated into a cheap and nasty plinth, full of low-cost plastic parts and poorly fitting accessories?

This is where the three-speed (including 78rpm) French-designed and manufactured Carbon Black is making its mark. What we have here is a turntable featuring a plinth and arm made from carbon fibre (normally found in very expensive turntables); there's also a digital frequency-generator motor via a flat belt that sits around the platter's outer rim, offering admirable speed stability and speed changes that can be initiated via a firm switch of an upper plinth-fitted metal toggle.

The straight Orbital Tension Tonearm features a novel tonearm-mounted, anti-skating wheel that supplies torsion directly above the bearing. Hanging off the arm is the excellent Ortofon 2M Red cartridge (which retails at around £100 on its own). In terms of

the turntable itself, then, what you have here is an intriguing combination of luxury materials, modern innovation and audiophile-centric design.

The lifestyle add-ons include a built-in phono amplifier (this turntable can't be connected to an external model), which will save hassle, time and expense in sourcing an external model. The built-in amp also means that you can plug the Omega 100 directly into powered speakers to save space.

THE TURNTABLE PROVIDES EXCELLENT DISCIPLINE ACROSS THE SOUNDSTAGE, FOCUS AND PRECISION IN THE MIDS AND NO SENSE OF BOOMING IN THE BASS REGIONS

FIXING A HOLE

There's an included USB port to allow you to rip vinyl to a digital file, while the Bluetooth module sends sound to a Bluetooth speaker. I tested the turntable with my reference BenQ treVolo S Bluetooth speaker and experienced the quick-and-easy pairing and efficient performance I'd expected.

As I mentioned above, this is a turntable of compromise. Build quality is much better than its cheaper turntable competition, but not of the very highest quality, in audiophile terms. You'll be looking at spending around £1,500 on VPI Industries' similarly all-in-one Player to achieve that. Also, sound quality is not up to its direct audiophile competition – those using external phono amplifiers – but then the Carbon Black is not supposed to compete with such designs. Comparing the Carbon Black with OEM models, it wipes the floor with them. It should do for the price, of course, but the sonic improvement here can be measured in leaps and bounds. On these terms, for both rock and jazz recordings, the turntable provides excellent discipline across the soundstage, focus and precision in the mids and no sense of booming in the bass regions.

I caution again, do not compare the Carbon Black with more expensive Regas and Pro-Jects or even Elipson's own audiophile-type designs. This is a lifestyle product offering both style and quality. It was much needed, too, to fill an important gap. If you're looking for a capable turntable with plenty of digital features and integrated additions, then Elipson's Omega 100 RIAA BT Carbon Black should be high on your list. ●

VERDICT

PROS

FEATURE LIST
DESIGN
MATERIALS USED
RELATIVE OVERALL SOUND QUALITY
EASE OF USE

CONS

AS A PACKAGED LIFESTYLE PRODUCT? NOTHING

SCORE
27/33⅓

MCINTOSH MT5

HIGH-END AUDIOPHILE TURNTABLE

£9,000 *www.jordanacoustics.co.uk 01202 911886*

The second turntable in McIntosh's range glows green like the rest of its products – **Paul Rigby** reviews the MT5…

There's a certain presence about the MT5 that oozes strength and mass. This is a turntable that looks solid – it appears strong, tough and meaty. In fact, while it resembles T+A's G2000R turntable, the difference is that the MT5 is aimed at the purist and the audiophile while the T+A features an included phono amplifier and is targeted at the high-end lifestyle market.

So, if the MT5 demands an external phono amplifier and has audiophile aspirations, it must be a bit special in terms of build and materials then, eh?

Well, you'd be right on that one. That strong design look I mentioned derives largely from the stainless-steel base of the plinth, along with an aluminium base plate and extra damping materials that are rounded off by an acrylic top plate.

Even the two-piece platter assembly provides heft and confidence in terms of build quality, with an anodised aluminium sub-platter (the bit that holds the belt) plus an outer platter made from silicone acrylic.

Despite the macho stylings of all of this, the ceramic bearing uses a magnetic suspension together with a cushion of air, giving an almost balletic aspect to the platter during play.

The DC motor is a Swiss-made affair that offers three speeds, including 78rpm. This will be a relief for those who want to keep their options as open as possible. It's nice to have the 78rpm speed offered on a high-end turntable for a change – I'm used to 78rpm being offered only by budget designs.

DESPITE ITS MACHO ASPECTS, THE CERAMIC BEARING USES A MAGNETIC SUSPENSION AND A CUSHION OF AIR, GIVING AN ALMOST BALLETIC ASPECT TO THE PLATTER DURING PLAY

When you buy the MT5, you also get a cartridge bundled with it. This one is a sort of super-budget design from Sumiko called the Blue Point No. 2 MC (worth around £200).

OHM ON THE RANGE

I noticed that McIntosh rated the cartridge at 1,000 ohm impedance, while Sumiko has it listed at 47k. I asked McIntosh about this and they kindly replied with: "Testing has shown the best frequency response is at 1,000 ohm – and then decrease gain by -6dB in the McIntosh phono section."

The upshot of this is that, if your phono amplifier can handle the 1,000-

ohm figure, you're laughing. If not, or if you only have an MM phono amplifier, then the Sumiko MC cartridge will work perfectly well in its default MM mode.

The front fascia offers control knobs for power and speed control, while there are controls around the back to fine-tune these speeds if required. The power supply is a switch-mode type, instead of a separate unit – which alarmed me a touch, until the company replied to my query with: "The outboard power supply isolates any noise from the turntable. It does not take a lot of power or a huge transformer to power the MT5."

Sound tests via The Isley Brothers and Nina Simone revealed a firm bass response and admirable detail, but the Sumiko added a plodding and over-cautious element. Extended listening tests forced me to try the £1,500-priced Ortofon Cadenza Bronze instead, which opened up the soundstage, supplied air and space into the midrange and enhanced the transient speeds within the bass frequencies to add pace to the lower end.

CARTRIDGE OF SIGHS

The sense of drama and power from Nina Simone's piano, for example, was truly thrilling, full of tension and edge – while the crackling nature of the electricity-infused funky 70s lead guitar from The Isley Brothers provided not just excitement, but real intensity.

If you want your MT5 to work properly and at the top of its game, then you need to replace the Sumiko cartridge and pick up a cartridge swimming in the £1,000-plus waters. When done, you'll find the MT5 offers excellent precision and focus in its midrange, with a confidence in the lower frequencies that will provide drive and control to the bass. That quality sound output aligns itself nicely to the straightforward setup and the sturdy and muscular overall design, to provide a turntable that breeds trust and assurance in its operation and sound output. ●

VERDICT

PROS

MEATY DESIGN
MIDRANGE AUTHORITY
STRONG BASS
EASY SETUP

CONS

NEEDS A QUALITY CARTRIDGE

SCORE
30/33⅓

MASTER & DYNAMIC
MH30
HEADPHONES

£279 *www.masterdynamic.co.uk*

John Pickford tests a pair of on-ear 'phones set to compete with those from more established brands…

Launched in 2014, New York-based Master & Dynamic are relative newcomers to the world of personal audio. While competitors such as Sennheiser, AKG and Beyerdynamic can boast decades of innovation in pro-audio design, M&D take their own philosophy of high-quality sound reproduction and present it in an elegantly stylish product.

The MH30s are an on-ear design with a classically timeless look, managing to appear both contemporary and modern while being reminiscent of the types used by RAF radar technicians in the 1940s. Exquisitely built and finished in anodised forged aluminium, with stainless steel components used in all high-strain areas, the MH30s ensure comfortable lengthy listening sessions courtesy of memory-foam earpads covered in soft lambskin. The cowhide leather headband is flexible enough for all head sizes, ensuring a snug fit that provides an excellent defence against extraneous outside noise.

Two detachable lengths of oxygen-free copper cable are provided: a 1.25m length with remote control and microphone and a straight 2m run, which can be plugged into either the left- or right-ear speaker for added convenience. Hi-fi tweakers can play with premium cables to try to upgrade the sound quality. However, replacing the cables with low-quality wire told me the supplied cables are more than adequate for the job.

The drivers – the really important bits – are a 40mm neodymium design, and while no frequency-response stats are reported in the tech specs, it's clear the MH30s have a smooth, relatively wideband response without obvious roll-off or suck-outs. Master & Dynamic state their philosophy of delivering "a rich, warm sound profile" and I agree completely. In strict audiophile terms, the MH30s lack neutrality, instead offering a cosy, sumptuous sound that attempts to bring out the best in your record collection, be it well-recorded acoustic music, congested modern-pop productions or old, scratchy mono rock 'n' roll 45s from the 1950s and 60s.

SONIC SIGNATURE

We listened to a wide range of music, both on the move and at home with our analogue, valve-powered equipment, and it's a testament to the MH30s flattering approach to sound reproduction that not once did we feel the need to skip a track because the 'phones flagged up a poor recording. Some ultra-transparent high-end designs sound wonderful with classical and audiophile recordings, but have you reaching for the off switch when tasked with replaying more rustic recordings.

We weren't initially predisposed to like the Master & Dynamics, seeing them as a lifestyle product that may lack the sound credentials of our beloved AKGs and Sennheisers. Yet the MH30s are a superb listen, providing musical detail and insight without over-exposing flaws in the source material to distract you from the pleasure of listening to your favourite music. A sophisticated design with a sublime signature sound, the MH30s are headphones for music lovers rather than hi-fi nuts. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
LUSCIOUS SOUND	LACK NEUTRALITY
EXCELLENT BUILD AND FINISH	
FOLDABLE FOR PORTABILITY	
COMFORTABLE	

SCORE
31/33⅓

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VINYL ART

Long Live Vinyl presents a selection of vinyl-related artwork to hang on the walls of your listening room, your kitchen, your living room, your bathroom…

Fred Birchal Design/Art

PRICE FROM $80

fredbirchal.com

Brazilian artist Fred Birchal's Music Costumes series depicts famous musical legends, minus, well, the famous musical legends… the focus is on their outfits. Birchal's range includes illustrations of Prince, Bob Dylan, Ramones, Joni Mitchell, Björk, Kraftwerk, Aretha Franklin, Pet Shop Boys, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Freddie Mercury. They're colourful, striking and minimalist works of art to illuminate any listening room.

Art Vinyl

PRICE £39, TRIPLE PACK £99

artvinyl.com

Art Vinyl offer stylish solutions for record collectors who prefer to display their sleeves as works of art. Their unique quick-release Play & Display Flip Frame makes it easy to swap sleeves over as often as you like. The frames are designed for different thicknesses and UV protected, so your records won't get damaged. They've also been curating the Best Art Vinyl Awards for the past 13 years and host regular exhibitions of sleeve art.

The Record's Ticking

PRICE FROM £19

therecordsticking.co.uk

Rob Hume has been handmaking clocks and lamps from records since 2013, applying iconic sleeves and images of bands and artists to 12" records. The lamps are made from solid beech hardwood, and Rob can create custom designs from your own image. Every upcycled record he uses is either unwanted, damaged or unplayable, so nothing goes to waste.

Hypergallery Limited Edition Cover Art

PRICE FROM £180

hypergallery.com

Founded by father and daughter team Rob and Emily Smeaton, Hypergallery is a vast collection of limited-edition prints, many signed by the original artist. There's a wide selection of Hipgnosis creations and plenty of David Bowie, Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin album sleeve work on sale. Be warned, though, prices range from £180 to well over £3,000.

Vinyl Pop Art

PRICE CONTACT FOR DETAILS

vinylpopart.com

Brooklyn artist Greg Frederick creates portraits out of hand-broken records and their packaging. His work has been displayed alongside Andy Warhol's in New York's Leslie-Lohman Museum and he's designed tour merch for Courtney Love. He's also available for private commissions.

Sound Wave Art

PRICE £7 TO £29

littlegiftfactory.co.uk

Produced in the UK, Sound Wave prints are a visual embodiment of the sound of your favourite record. They come in equaliser, spiral and standard wave formats in a range of colours, with or without lyrics. They can even create a print from a movie quote or your baby's heartbeat. ●

The Vinylist

SUZANNE VERWEIJ

Dutch *Long Live Vinyl* reader and music aficionado **Suzanne Verweij** offers a snapshot of her eclectic collection, which ranges from modern pop to Rammstein…

To be in with a chance of seeing your record collection in *Long Live Vinyl*, email your details and a picture to gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

What was the first record you bought?
"I think it was *Lungs* from Florence + The Machine. I saw the band live at the Lowlands Festival in 2009. I loved it! It's still one of my favourite albums."

What artists and genres are you most interested in?
"Some great bands from Great Britain are my favourites. I really love Florence + The Machine, Daughter and London Grammar. They all have such an amazing sound. But, I also love rock, in all kinds of ways – from Pearl Jam to Rammstein."

How many records do you have?
"It's close to 800 records right now."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"That has to be Pearl Jam's *No Code*. The original one from 1996. I bought it in a record store in Ghent, Belgium. Such a great album and artwork. Luckily, they released it last year for the second time, so now we can all enjoy this beautiful album."

What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"I do want to own the record from Urban Cookie Collective, *High On A Happy Vibe*. Every time I hear *The Key The Secret* I can't stop dancing and it brings me back to the 90s."

What's your listening setup?
"My turntable, amp and power supply are all made by Rega; the Rega Brio-R amp and the Rega TT-PSU. I love the simplicity of the turntable, the Rega RP3. The white wooden board and the black tonearm give it a clean look. And it looks very nice with the white speakers from Bowers & Wilkins: the 707 S2. To keep my records clean and crisp, I do wash them with a record cleaning machine: the Okki Nokki. A must-have for every vinyl collector!" ●

SME *Craftsmanship*

This is Laurence working on the final assembly of an SME tonearm. He has over thirty years of experience ensuring that the precision components come together perfectly.

Every SME turntable and tonearm is handmade in West Sussex. Each stage relies on highly skilled engineers like Laurence, united in their passion for perfection.

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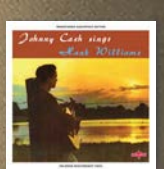

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